

N. POPOV

OUTLINE HISTORY *of the*  
COMMUNIST PARTY  
*of the* SOVIET UNION

Part I

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MARTIN LAWRENCE





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## PREFACE

The English edition of N Popov's *Outline History of the C P S U* represents a translation of the latest, the sixteenth, Russian edition. Part I embraces the period from the early beginnings of the Russian labour movement down to the Revolution of October 1917, Part II covers the period from the October Revolution down to and including the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in 1930.

A study of the history of Bolshevism is of great importance not only because of the significant place in world history occupied by the October Revolution and by the work of socialist construction being performed in the Soviet Union under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, but also because of the pre-eminent part played by the Russian Bolsheviks in the international labour movement.

A more than superficial study of the history of the Bolshevik Party is impossible without a knowledge of the chief works of its founder and leader, Lenin, and of his best disciple, Stalin, who is continuing his work. While presenting a systematic exposition of the history of the Russian labour movement and of the October Revolution, N Popov's book at the same time will serve as a valuable aid to the study of the works of Lenin and Stalin.

Published English translations of the works quoted by the author in this book are availed of where possible and corresponding references given. In all other cases the references are to the Russian publications.

THE PUBLISHERS



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## OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE C P S.U





## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORICAL PRECURSORS OF BOLSHEVISM

*Rise of the working class in Russia—The “emancipation” of the peasants—Beginning of a revolutionary movement among the intellectual commoners—Narodnik socialism—Failure of the Narodnik propaganda—Rebel agitation—Terrorism The People’s Will Group—The working class movement prior to the emancipation of the peasants in 1861—First revolutionary working class organisations Marxian theory and the revolutionary movement in Russia—The Emancipation of Labour Group—Strike movement in the ’eighties and the Social-Democratic circles—The origin of the Party*

#### *Rise of the Working Class in Russia*

The Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in Russia was formed, grew up and matured as the vanguard of the working class in its struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It grew up, as its great leader, Lenin, expressed it, on the granite theory of Marxism, which embodied in the form of general principles the experience of the development and revolutionary struggle of the working class of the world.

Bolshevism, as a political current and as an independent party, exists since 1903. But it had its precursors which prepared the soil and created the conditions for the formation of the Bolshevik Party.

We must examine the activities of these historical precursors of Bolshevism in close conjunction with the growth of the working class, which is the social basis of the Leninist Bolshevik Party, and in close conjunction with the development of the revolutionary struggle.

The beginnings of large-scale industry in Russia and the formation of a working class must be referred to the eighteenth century, although at that time the number of factories and mills was still extremely small. They were chiefly engaged in manufacturing military supplies for the government. That government was a landlords’ government, but it had also close ties with

merchant capital the development of which had at that time already begun. The workers employed in these factories were serfs, known as *possessional*. They were legally bound to the factories and their economic conditions were deplorable. In the second half of the eighteenth century we note, in addition to the state-owned factories, the appearance of factories belonging to members of the nobility. These factories also employed serf labourers who were recruited from the peasants belonging to the nobles owning the factories. Still later we find the appearance of *factories employing free labour*. These grew out of domestic craft industry and merchant capital. In 1825 (the year of the Decembrist uprising) the industrial workers in Russia numbered 210,000, of which 29,000 were *possessional* labourers, 66,000 serfs (employed in nobles' factories) and 114,000 free labourers. Of the latter a large number also consisted of peasant serfs, sent to work in the factories by their landlords and compelled to surrender a part of their wages to the latter by way of quit-rent. The appearance in the economic life of Russia of privately-owned factories implied the invasion of new capitalist forms into the old feudal economic system. The "abolition" of serfdom in 1861 was primarily dictated by the interests of the nobles in connection with the increasing export of grain from Russia since hired labour is more productive than serf labour. On the other hand, the tsarist government was moved to emancipate the peasants because of the increasing labour "disorders" and peasant revolts, as well as by consideration for the rising class of industrial capitalists, who, in order to increase their production, required an ever growing market and an ever larger number of "free" labourers. Serfdom tied the peasants to the land and to their owners, which meant that labour was artificially retained in the villages.

\* Decembrists—a term since applied to members of the movement which culminated in the revolt on the Senate Square in St. Petersburg on December 14, 1825. The Decembrist movement consisted of certain more enlightened members of the Russian middle landed nobility, mostly military men, who set themselves the aim of securing the abolition of the feudal system and the autocratic monarchy. The revolt was crushed and the chief ring-leaders executed, while others were condemned to exile. The government dealt particularly savagely with the rank-and-file soldiers who took part in the revolt: they were made to run the gauntlet, some were flogged to death and others exiled.

*The "Emancipation" of the Peasants*

The "emancipation" from serfdom powerfully accelerated the process of proletarianisation of the peasantry. This was to the interest of the capitalists, for the capitalists are purchasers of labour power. The peasants were "emancipated" not only from serf dependence, but also from the best portions of their land, which fell into the hands of the landlords (these were known as *otrezki*, or segments, *i.e.*, sections of common land formerly used by the peasants and annexed by the landlords).<sup>\*</sup> This was done in order to compel the peasants to lease from the landlords, on onerous terms, the land of which they had been deprived. The peasants cultivated this land with their own implements and were obliged to pay a portion of their crop in the form of rent. At the same time a number of laws that bound the peasant to his land still retained their validity (such as the law which held the village commune jointly responsible to the state for the obligations of every individual member). As Lenin later wrote.

"Part of the peasants became entirely landless, and, what is more important, those who still retained a portion of their land were obliged to redeem it by purchase from the landlords as though it were entirely alien property, and moreover at a price raised to artificially high levels."

In addition, the "emancipated" peasants were compelled to pay preposterous purchase prices for the land set aside for allotment. These payments were spread over a great number of years. In fact it was not until the Revolution of 1905 that the peasants were finally relieved of the burden of the redemption payments. The "Reform" of 1861 enabled the government to kill two birds with one stone: first, to provide both the factory owners and the landlords with a supply of cheap labour power, and, secondly, to provide the landlords with tenants whose plight was such as to compel them to submit to any conditions, however enslaving. These survivals of the serf system, inasmuch as they held the peasant tied to the land, were a hindrance to the development of capitalism. The impoverished peasants, unable to leave the land, and fleeced both by the landlords and the landlords' government, were able only very slowly to increase their effective demand for the products of manufacturing industry. Thus, by protecting the interests of the feudal nobility, the government

<sup>\*</sup> In the central agricultural belt these *segments* comprised about one-fourth of the land formerly cultivated by the peasants.

seriously hindered the development of the home market, which is fundamental to the existence of capitalist industry. The government in every way aided the landlords in plundering and ruining the peasants. In spite of all this the reform of 1861 facilitated capitalist development, capitalist industry continued to grow. In 1860 there were 560,000 workers in Russia; by 1862 the number had increased to 870,000. The growth of the working class was an essential feature of the development of capitalism.

"The peasant reform," Lenin wrote, "was carried out by the self-owners as a bourgeois reform. It was a step toward the transformation of Russia into a bourgeois monarchy... After 1861 the development of capitalism in Russia proceeded with such rapidity that within the space of a few decades a transformation was accomplished that required whole centuries in certain of the older countries of Europe."

### *Beginning of a Revolutionary Movement Among the Intellectual Commoners* <sup>\*†</sup>

It is at this period that we first observe the beginnings of a serious revolutionary movement in Russia. The development of capitalism creates not only a bourgeoisie and a working class but also an intelligentsia or class of intellectuals, the numbers of which steadily increase. The intelligentsia does not comprise an independent class in bourgeois society. It forms an intermediary stratum between the two fundamental classes, the capitalists and the proletarians. A certain section of the intellectuals (the higher engineering and technical staffs, for instance), are closely bound up, even identified, with the capitalist class; but the larger section (the lower clerical and brain workers) stand much closer to the proletariat. A certain section of the intelligentsia (government officials, members of parliament, journalists, etc.) form an organic part of the apparatus of class government, its ideological general staff, so to speak. Other sections are directly engaged in serving capitalist enterprises. Although they themselves are exploited by the capitalist class, they at the same time serve as an instrument in the hands of that class for the exploitation of the working class masses. Finally, another and fairly numerous category of intellectuals consists of the members

\* Lenin, "The Peasant Reform and the Proletarian-Peasant Revolution," *Collected Works*, Vol. XV.

† I.e., petty-bourgeois intellectuals, at that time referred to as *raznochintsy*, or commoners.

of the free professions (lawyers, doctors, etc.), whose position in society is very much akin to the position of independent artisans.

During the period of transition from feudal society to bourgeois capitalist society, the intelligentsia as a rule is politically the most active section of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois classes. The development of capitalism, particularly in its earlier stages, is accompanied by a rapid growth of all groups of intellectuals, and any hindrance to that development is felt by the intellectuals very acutely.

The series of bourgeois reforms introduced by the tsarist government after the "emancipation" of the peasants (establishment of courts of law, rural government bodies, etc.) was not enough to provide an adequate field for the energies of the growing intelligentsia in a semi-feudal country. That factor alone was sufficient to arouse dissatisfaction with the existing economic and political system among the intelligentsia, part of whom were allied with the rising bourgeoisie of the cities and part with the peasantry.

The revolutionary movement to which this state of affairs gave rise, although calling itself socialist, was essentially a bourgeois democratic movement. In that respect Russia was no exception: in analogous historical periods the bourgeois democrats of Western Europe also acted in the name of socialism.

Socialist labels concealed the petty-bourgeois nature of their bearers, even though the latter themselves frequently did not realise it. The socialist phraseology of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals as a rule reflected the dissatisfaction of the masses with feudal and capitalist exploitation.

### *Narodnik Socialism*

This socialism was of an extremely vague and indefinite kind, a non-proletarian socialism, reflecting the intermediary position between two classes of the petty bourgeoisie, particularly of the peasantry. The petty-bourgeois intelligentsia spoke not in the name of the proletariat, but in the name of the whole people, of all the toilers in general, and of the peasantry in particular. That,

\* "From that moment [*i.e.*, the Decembrist uprising—*NP*] until 1881, when Alexander II was assassinated by the terrorists, the movement [*i.e.*, the revolutionary movement—*NP*] was led by middle class intellectuals. But they did not achieve and could not achieve their immediate aim—to call

indeed, is easily understood, for Russia, judged by the majority of its population, was essentially a peasant country, in spite of the steady development of capitalist production relations.<sup>4</sup> The petty-bourgeois intelligentsia was associated primarily with the peasantry. A large section of the intellectuals reflected the interests chiefly of the peasantry.

In the preceding centuries Russia had witnessed several mass revolutionary struggles of the peasants against the autocratic and serf system. One need only mention the rebellions of Stenka Razin and of Emelyan Pugachov, apart from a number of smaller instances of peasant unrest and disorders. Peasant unrest was a permanent feature of the period preceding the abolition of serfdom. The famous dictum of Alexander II was not without justification: better to free the peasants from above, than wait until they freed themselves from below.

Under the circumstances it was only natural that a large number of the revolutionary intellectual commoners should become the theoretical spokesmen of the revolutionary peasantry, the apostles, so to speak, of a peasant revolution against the land-

lordship a popular revolution" (Lenin, *The 1905 Revolution, Selected Works*, Vol. III). Of course, by its participation in the revolutionary movement, the intelligentsia was expressing not only its own dissatisfaction with the existing order, but also the dissatisfaction of the sections of society with which it was organically associated (the lower middle class of the towns, the peasantry, etc.), for whom it acted as ideological spokesman.

"In order to form an opinion," Lenin wrote, "of 'non-estate' Russian intelligentsia, which as a particular group in Russian society characterised the post-reform era we must compare the ideas, and particularly the programmes, of our 'non-estate' intelligentsia with the position and interests of the given classes of Russian society. . . . The Russian advanced, liberal and 'democratic' intelligentsia was a bourgeois intelligentsia. The fact that they were assigned to no social estate or order, in no way excludes the class origin of the ideas of the intelligentsia. Always and everywhere when the bourgeoisie revolted against feudalism they did so on behalf of the abolition of the social estates or orders. In our country too, the intelligentsia who belonged to no social estate rose up against the old feudal system of social estates. . . . But as soon as the system of social estates in Russia was severely shaken (1861) antagonisms immediately began to reveal themselves among the 'people'. At the same time, and as a result, antagonisms also revealed themselves among the non-estate intelligentsia, antagonisms between the liberals and the Narodniki, the theoreticians of the peasantry." (Lenin, "New Economic Movements in Peasant Life," *Collected Works*, Vol. I)

<sup>4</sup> In 1812 the urban population comprised 4.4 per cent of the whole population of Russia, in the middle of the century 7.8 per cent, and in 1897—13 per cent.

lords and against tsarism. To their number, for example, belonged N. G. Chernyshevsky.

"The 'emancipation' of the peasants, as a result of which the best lands remained in the hands of the landlords and colossal contributions were laid on the peasants in the form of purchase payments, was naturally not of a kind to satisfy the peasant masses. That was obvious to the representatives of the revolutionary intelligentsia of the time, to its ideological leaders. Chernyshevsky wrote not a few articles exposing the pro-noble and anti-peasant character of the so-called great reform and also the bourgeois liberals, whose policy was to make a deal with the serfowners

"The liberals wanted to 'emancipate' Russia 'from above,' not by destroying either the tsarist monarchy, or the land possessions and the power of the landlords, but by trying merely to persuade them to make concessions to the spirit of the times."\*

That, to use Lenin's terminology, was the Prussian path of capitalist development in Russia. It involved a deal between the bourgeoisie and the serfowners and serf monarchy.

In distinction from the liberals, the Narodniki stood for the complete abolition of feudal forms of landownership and for a far-reaching, democratic revolution

"Chernyshevsky was not only a utopian socialist, he was also a revolutionary democrat advocating, as far as the obstacles of the censorship permitted, the idea of a peasant revolution, of a struggle on the part of the masses for the overthrow of the old powers of government" \*\*

This implied the complete destruction of the relics of serfdom and the serf monarchy and was the American path of capitalist development "These two historical tendencies developed during the half century following February 19" \*\*\* They represented the Prussian and American paths of capitalist development. The Prussian path retarded capitalist development, and, moreover, imposed intolerable suffering on the peasant masses, who were fleeced both by the tsarist government and by the landlords

Intellectual revolutionary circles sharing Chernyshevsky's views began to multiply with extreme rapidity at the end of the 'sixties. Their efforts were directed towards hastening the revolutionary peasant movement.

\* Lenin, "The Peasant Reform and the Proletarian-Peasant Revolution," *Collected Works*, Vol. XV.

\*\* *Ibid*

\*\*\* *Ibid* February 19, 1861 was the date of the Manifesto emancipating the peasants.



The majority of these revolutionary circles endeavoured to conduct "socialist" propaganda among the people. Hence the "going among the people" movement, as it was called. One of their leaders, P. L. Lavrov, argued that "critically thinking people"—*viz*, the intellectuals—were the underlying force of social progress and that it was their duty to carry the knowledge of socialism to the people, to lead the uneducated masses to the light of socialism. Lavrov's theory regarding critically thinking people was later appropriated by the Social-Revolutionaries.

The Narodniki regarded themselves as representing a peculiar, purely Russian, form of socialism. They explained their form of socialism as being due to the specific nature of Russian peasant life, the existence of the *peasant commune*. It was only natural that the Narodniki, as ideologists of the peasantry, should endeavour to prove that the Russian peasant, owing to his communal form of life, inherited, as the Narodniki asserted, from the profound past, from the time of primitive communism, was better adapted than anybody (better even than the proletariat of Western Europe) to grasp the ideas of socialism, ideas of equality and fraternity, of social ownership of the means of production and of social forms of labour.

#### *Failure of the Narodnik Propaganda*

The propaganda of the Narodniki never enjoyed much success. The upper strata of the peasantry were more or less contented with the reform of 1861, since it provided a certain scope for the development of a peasant bourgeoisie. This gave rise to the "Kolupayevs and Razuvayevs," types of kulaks, or rich peasants, portrayed in the Russian literature of the time. The kulaks were unsympathetic to the preachings of the Narodniki, they, time and again, betrayed the propagandists to the police, while the poor and middle peasants, their minds dulled by poverty and ignorance, had yet no clear idea of the causes of the intolerable conditions from which they suffered. The exploitation by the landlords no longer bore a direct and obvious form. As the poet Nekrasov expressed it, the gyves of serfdom had fallen from the peasant, but other fetters bound him helpless and impotent. The peasant himself frequently did not observe his fetters. He

did not realise that the sweat of his brow and his crushing toil went to the construction of railroads, mills and banks in unknown far-off lands.

In its form of peaceful propaganda, which was originally its most prevalent form, of "going among the people" and preaching socialism, the Narodnik movement proved a failure. One of the participants in this movement, Zhelyabov, who was implicated in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and condemned to be hanged, said at his trial in reference to this period "Our actions were once inspired by the dreaminess of rosy youth, and we are not to blame that it ended so quickly." And end it did with startling swiftness. The tsarist government showed no inclination to stand by with folded arms while revolutionary propaganda was being spread in the villages. The whole force of the police system was set in motion. Hundreds of propagandists were flung into gaol. But the movement was not crushed.

Certain of the Narodniki were at first inclined to confine their activities to peaceful propaganda on behalf of a socialist society, which they pictured as being made up of peasant communes and producing co-operative organisations. But by the 'sixties a new current arose among the Narodnik intelligentsia, advocating violent revolution and appealing to the masses, primarily, of course, to the peasantry. We may mention as examples the proclamation of "Young Russia" and the activities of Nechaev. But their preaching was of too abstract a character, it consisted of general reflections on the subject of exploitation, and of such arguments as "we are millions, while the miscreants are few," as one of the famous revolutionaries of that period, Mikhailov, declared in his proclamation *To the Younger Generation*.

Thus, in addition to the propagandists, followers of the Narodnik, Lavrov, who argued the necessity of carrying on protracted propaganda work among the peasantry, we find rebels predominating among the revolutionaries who demanded a violent revolution.

### *Rebel Agitation*

The rebels were followers of the famous anarchist Bakunin, whose influence on the Russian revolutionary movement was tremendous. The rebels declared that it was useless to appeal to,

the people with abstract, socialist propaganda, which they were, unable to understand. The people, they argued, are practical and draw their revolutionary ideas only from the economic realities that surround them.

The followers of Bakunin taught that the revolutionary movement among the masses must be built up around their discontent with existing economic conditions. Everywhere the peasants suffered from the local landlord and the local government official. The numerous revolts in which the history of the Russian peasantry abounds always arose spontaneously from definite causes of discontent, and spread with extreme rapidity, owing to the fact that the discontent of the peasantry was general and everywhere due to similar causes. Bakunin preached anarchist revolt. He declared that in Russia the bandit was the best and purest type of popular revolutionary. He accused Marx of scorning the lumpen-proletariat, in whom he, Bakunin, discerned "the whole brain and future of the social revolution." Marx indeed regarded the lumpen-proletariat as a passive product of the decomposition of the capitalist system.

In the middle 'seventies attempts were made to carry on agitation among the masses with the purpose of arousing revolts based on local causes of discontent and with the hope that such revolts would spontaneously develop into a general insurrection. The rebel Narodniki pictured the new order as a free federation of anarchist communes. This was the anarchism of petty-bourgeois intellectuals who primarily defended and expressed the interests of the peasantry, and who attempted to assume the leadership of the revolutionary movement of the peasant masses against the landlords. It in no way contradicts the petty bourgeois character of the intelligentsia, but, on the contrary directly follows therefrom. A striking proof of this is the popularity enjoyed by anarchism in such typically petty-bourgeois countries as France, Spain and Italy.

A peasant revolutionary movement without centralised leadership, without a strong organisation to direct it, and without the leadership of the proletariat had no possible chance of success. The isolated revolutionary was impotent against the powerful police system of the tsar. And so it came to be realised that only, a centralised and closely-knit revolutionary organisation would be able to deal a mortal blow to tsarism provided it could become

the centre and leader of the revolutionary movement. This idea, which in Western Europe had been advocated by the Jacobins and the Blanquists, was adopted by one of the greatest and most remarkable revolutionaries of the time, Tkachev, who advocated his views in the *Nabat (The Alarm)* a paper published outside of Russia. His ideas did not at once fall on responsive soil. This was also the case with the analogous views of Nechaev, who believed that the preaching of the anarchist communism of Bakunin must be combined with conspiratorial tactics. But in the second half of the 'seventies more systematic and persistent attempts were made to create a centralised organisation, to act as the centre and leader of the revolutionary movement. Such an organisation was finally created in 1878, in the shape of the *Zemlya i Volya (Land and Freedom)*. This marked a tremendous advance in the Russian revolutionary movement which had hitherto been disintegrated and diffused and therefore incapable of seriously opposing the powerful machinery of the tsarist government. With the creation of a stable and centralised organisation the Russian revolutionary movement became a real menace to tsardom.

A quarter of a century later Lenin in his *What Is To Be Done* expressed his profound respect for the organisers and the leaders of *Zemlya i Volya* and recommended that their experience in organisation should be taken as an example.

"The history of the revolutionary movement is so little understood among us that the very idea of a militant centralised organisation which declares a determined war upon tsarism is described as Narodovolist. But the magnificent organisation that the revolutionists had in the 'seventies and which should serve us all as a model, was not formed by the Narodovoltsi, but by the adherents of *Zemlya i Volya*'. . . 'No revolutionary tendency, if it seriously thinks of fighting, can dispense with such an organisation. But the mistake the Narodovoltsi committed was not that they strove to recruit to their organisation *all* the discontented, and to hurl this organisation into the battle against the autocracy; on the contrary, that was their great historical merit. Their mistake was that they relied on a theory which in substance was not a revolutionary theory at all, and they either did not know how, or circumstances did not permit them, to link up their movement inseparably with the class struggle that was going on within developing capitalist society. And only a gross failure to understand Marxism (or an 'understanding' of it in the spirit of Struvisin) could generate the opinion that the rise of a mass, spontaneous labour movement relieves us of

the duty of creating as good an organisation of revolutionists as *Zemlya i Volya* had in its time, and even a better one”<sup>\*</sup>

But the chief aim of the *Zemlya i Volya* organisation was to lead the terrorist movement and not the revolutionary struggle of the masses

### *Terrorism*

The revolutionary Narodniki had engaged in terrorist acts even before the organisation of *Zemlya i Volya*. They were driven to adopt this method of warfare, firstly, owing to the persecution by the tsarist government, and, secondly, owing to the failure of their agitation among the masses. The inadequate response shown by the masses to the revolutionary appeals of the Narodniki drove the movement to resort to individual acts of terrorism with the aim of disorganising the government machinery which stood between the revolutionaries and the masses of the people.

The terrorist acts were at first directed against individual servitors of tsarism, such as spies, provocateurs and zealous administrators who distinguished themselves by exceptional ferocity in their persecution of the revolutionaries. The earlier terrorist attempts were acts of vengeance for brutality shown to revolutionaries (such, for instance, was the shot fired by Vera Zasulich at General Trepov, who had ordered the flogging of the political prisoner Bogolepov). But terrorism soon acquired independent political significance. The opinion arose that vigorous terrorist blows, aimed at disorganising the tsarist state machine, would wring concessions from the tsarist government and thereby create more favourable conditions for revolutionary agitation among the people. Terrorism, or as it was called, “disorganization,” thus became a method of political struggle. It won a large number of adherents among the members of *Zemlya i Volya*, and soon that organisation had to decide what methods it should adopt in the future.

Two alternatives presented themselves either to continue insurrectionary agitation among the people, agitation which had not produced particularly tangible results, or, to concentrate on terrorism with the aim of disorganising the government and wresting from it political concessions which would create the

<sup>\*</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol II, Moscow

possibility of conducting widespread socialist propaganda among the masses. These two currents of opinion gave rise to a bitter struggle within *Zemlya i Volya*, ending in the formal split of the organisation after a congress held in Voronezh in 1879.

The advocates of terrorism formed an independent organisation, known as *Narodnaya Volya* (*The People's Will*) while the supporters of the old views created a separate group, known as *Cherny Peredel* (*Black Redistribution*).

The latter, the *Chernoperedeltsi*, did not fully realise the importance of a centralised revolutionary organisation. On the other hand, they did realise that terrorism could not replace a mass revolutionary struggle.

To the *Narodovoltsi* adhered those members of the lower intelligentsia who formerly regarded the peasantry chiefly as a fighting force against tsarism, with the help of which concessions could be won on behalf of the liberal bourgeois reformers. However, among the *Narodovoltsi* predominated sincere fighters and ideologists of the peasant revolution, who believed that revolution could be set in motion by disorganising the tsarist government machine. They realised that a powerful and centralised revolutionary organisation was necessary in order to overthrow the autocracy, and considered *Narodnaya Volya* such an organisation.<sup>1</sup>

### *The People's Will Group*

The work carried on by the *Chernoperedeltsi* among the peasants was extremely unproductive.

Much more successful, at first at least, was the work of the terrorists. Their efforts were primarily directed against the tsar, Alexander II, by removing whom the *Narodovoltsi* hoped to decapitate the government machine and force the government to grant concessions. These concessions were to take the form

<sup>1</sup> To this very day certain of our historians are inclined to side with the *Cherny Peredel* as against the *Narodnaya Volya*, and even to regard the former as almost a Marxist group.

But the *Narodovoltsi* had an undoubted advantage over the *Chernoperedeltsi* inasmuch as they firmly adopted a policy of political struggle against the autocracy which in certain respects created what, for those times, was a model of revolutionary organisation. That is why Karl Marx unreservedly supported the *Narodovoltsi* as against the *Chernoperedeltsi*, and that was why Lenin valued them so highly.

of a constitution. A large number of the *Narodovoltsi* believed that in view of the socialist sympathies and leanings (as they supposed) of the vast majority of the people, and particularly of the peasants, a constitution would immediately lead to the realisation of a socialist system in Russia. They also believed that if a Constituent Assembly were summoned, the socialists would obtain the overwhelming majority. On the other hand, a section of the *Narodovoltsi* gradually cooled towards socialism and began to draw closer and closer in their sympathies and views towards bourgeois liberalism. Within the *Narodnaya Volya* we thus find the advocates of two distinct paths of capitalist development in Russia. 1) the bourgeois liberal, or Prussian path of development—involving a compromise between the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the feudal landlords and tsarism, on the other, and 2) the peasant revolutionary democratic, or American, path of development—involving the destruction of tsarism and feudal landlordism.

After the Voronezh Congress of 1879 attempt after attempt was made on the life of Alexander II. He was finally killed on March 1, 1881, by a bomb thrown by the terrorist Grinevetsky.\*

The assassination of the tsar, of course, did not result in the destruction of tsarism. The government waged merciless warfare against the *Narodovoltsi*. In 1879 a number of the most prominent leaders of *Narodnaya Volya* were arrested and executed. Following the assassination of Alexander II on March 1, 1881 (and even on the eve of it) some of the most active terrorist organisers—Zhelyabov, Kibalchich and Sofia Perovskaya—fell into the hands of the police and were tried and condemned to death. By 1884, the *Narodnaya Volya* organisation was completely smashed. The new tsar, Alexander III, surrounded himself with the blackest reactionaries.

The revolutionary movement was at an impasse. The peasant revolution against the landlords and tsarism had not yet matured. As subsequent events showed, without the leadership of the proletariat of the towns it stood not the slightest chance of success.

\* Two attempts on the life of Alexander II were made even before the *Narodnaya Volya* was formed. He was fired on, unsuccessfully, by Karakozov, an organiser of one of the revolutionary circles in the 'sixties. The second attempt made with the knowledge of the leaders of *Zemlya i Volya*, was organised in 1879 by a school teacher named Solovyov. Both Solovyov and Karakozov were executed.

The attempts of small groups of petty-bourgeois intellectuals to conduct an independent revolutionary struggle by means of terrorist acts also ended in failure, and in fact, could not end otherwise.

Certain of the leaders of the defeated revolutionary movement thought they discerned a way out of the situation by combining the experience of the *Narodniki* and the *Narodovoltsi* with the lessons of the labour movement of Western Europe.

*The Working Class Movement Prior to the Emancipation of the Peasants in 1861*

In the early 'seventies the revolutionary *Narodniki* began to form circles for workingmen in several cities, particularly in St. Petersburg. They did so in spite of the fact that the *Narodniki* did not regard the working class as of particular revolutionary importance and saw no significance in the fact that unrest among the factory workers had become a fairly widespread phenomenon even in pre-reform Russia, flaring up spontaneously and unprompted by external propaganda.

It may be asserted without the slightest fear of exaggeration that one of the reasons which impelled the government to abolish serfdom was the growing "disorders" among the workers. As early as 1845 Nicholas I promulgated a law declaring participation in strikes a felony. Zakrevsky, governor of the city of Moscow, terrified by working class unrest and by the 1848 revolutions in Europe, in which the workers took an active part, wrote a report in which he proposed that it should be forbidden to build any more factories in Russia. He argued that "the government should not permit the concentration of homeless and immoral people, easily attracted to any movement aiming at the destruction of the public and private tranquillity." Another brilliant administrator of the reign of Nicholas I appealed to his government to prohibit the construction of railroads, since they accustomed people to move from place to place without good reason and thus "aggravated the inconstancy of our times."

We thus see that the autocratic government of Nicholas I attached much greater significance to the revolutionary qualities of the proletariat than the revolutionary *Narodniki*, who, as Plekhanov puts it, regarded the working class as "the spoilt child



of civilisation " The government could not forget the vast crowd on the Senate Square on December 14, 1825, consisting for the most part of factory workers from the suburbs of St. Petersburg, who greeted the mounted troops summoned to disperse the "insurrectionaries" with a hail of brickbats.

### *First Revolutionary Working Class Organisations*

The reason the Narodniki undertook propaganda among the workers in spite of the slight importance they attached to them as an independent force was simply that it was far easier to conduct propaganda among the workers in the cities than among peasants in the villages. Furthermore, workers trained by propaganda were themselves able to conduct propaganda in the rural districts far more successfully than the intellectuals. In 1875 several workers' circles in Odessa transformed themselves into a complete organisation, known as the South Russian Workers' League, led by Zaslavsky. The statutes of the South Russian League bear traces of the influence of the ideas of the First International although fundamentally the authors of the statutes shared the views of the Narodniki. The Odessa League maintained contact with Rostov.

Propaganda among the workers of St. Petersburg was conducted by members of *Zemlya i Volya*, among them Plekhanov. In his pamphlet, *The Russian Worker in the Revolutionary Movement*, Plekhanov gives an extremely interesting description of his first propaganda activities among the workers and notes how receptive the workers, in contrast to the peasants, were to the preaching of socialism. The Narodniki in St. Petersburg did not confine themselves to propaganda alone; they attempted to assume leadership of the strikes that broke out in several factories, particularly at the time of the severe industrial crisis at the end of the 'seventies.

In 1878 a new organisation appeared in St. Petersburg known as the North Russian Workers' League, which attempted to issue its own paper, *Zarya Rabochevo* (*The Workers' Dawn*).<sup>\*</sup> The leaders of this organisation were Victor Obnorsky and Stepan Khalturin, both workers. The latter subsequently became a ter-

<sup>\*</sup> The paper was seized by the police on the eve of publication, together with the illegal printing press of the North Russian Workers' League

rorist and was the organiser of the explosion in the Winter Palace. In the programme of the North Russian Workers' League we find views differing from the Bakunist anarchist views shared by the majority of the Narodniki of that time, who advocated the transformation of Russia into a free federation of anarchist communes through the instrumentality of a revolutionary and insurrectionary movement. The programme of the North Russian Workers' League declared that the working class must conduct a political struggle and strive to win political freedom in order to facilitate the fight for socialism.

The Northern League was soon smashed by the government. A section of its leaders, headed by Stepan Khalturin, joined the terrorists.<sup>1</sup> Both the South and the North Russian Workers' Leagues, as distinct from the Narodniki of the 'seventies, had come to realise the necessity for a political struggle of the working class as a preliminary condition for the struggle for socialism.

At that period too an attempt was made in Kiev, headed by Kovalskaya and Shchedrin, to organise a new South Russian Workers' League. It developed fairly widespread activities, but was soon destroyed. However, the task of organising workers' circles was continued by the *Narodovoltsi*. In 1881 a programme was published by workers belonging to the *Narodnaya Volya* party. Certain prominent terrorists, Zhelyabov, for instance, also carried on propaganda among the workers. Their aim however was not to assist the working class movement, but rather to gain recruits for their terrorist work. The *Narodovoltsi* maintained connections with workers in St Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Rostov and Saratov.

The revolutionaries had become disillusioned with their former methods. Their propaganda among the workers led them to the conclusion that the working class was perfectly capable of acting as the chief revolutionary force in the country, a role which they had previously assigned to the peasantry, and that, moreover, without the assistance of the working class it would be impossible to overthrow the autocracy, let alone bring about socialism. This conviction was a result not merely of the success of revolutionary propaganda among the workers; at that time

<sup>1</sup> After the explosion in the Winter Palace, which he organised, Khalturin managed to escape, but subsequently, in 1882, was arrested in Odessa and executed for implication in the assassination of the procurator Strelnikov.

it was already becoming obvious that capitalism was developing in Russia and that this development was being accompanied by the growing importance of the working class. To this must be added the recognition of the rapid spread of the working class movement in Western Europe and the increasing activities of the Social Democratic parties in the various European countries.

*Marxian Theory and the Revolutionary Movement in Russia*

*The Communist Manifesto*, drawn up by Marx and Engels, first appeared in 1848, on the eve of revolution in several European countries, and a few months prior to the June uprising of the Paris workers against the French bourgeois republic. *The Communist Manifesto* marked the beginning of a new era, an era of conscious revolutionary struggle by the advanced workers of the world on behalf of communism.

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," we read in *The Communist Manifesto*. Modern capitalist society, it goes on to say, has resulted from a long process of development and from a series of revolutions in methods of production and exchange. That development is still continuing and is leading to the division of society more and more into two hostile camps, into two opposed classes—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The proletariat grows and develops as a result of the impoverishment of the intermediate sections of society, the small property owners, who become ruined as a result of the growth of capitalism. The class struggle is a political struggle, a struggle for the possession of the power of the state. The power of the modern state is in fact "merely a committee managing the general affairs of the bourgeoisie." By seizing the power of the state in a revolutionary way, the proletariat gains possession of the vast means of production concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie and uses them for the creation of a communist society, in which there is no division into classes and the exploitation of man by man is unknown. The proletarians have nothing to lose in the struggle, but they have a world to gain. Such are the fundamental ideas of *The Communist Manifesto*.

These ideas were at first the possession of the small group of advanced workers and revolutionaries who formed the Com-

munist League. Less than twenty years later, in 1864 the International Workingmen's Association was created, also known as the First International. The main works of Marx and Engels (*A Critique of Political Economy*, the first volume of *Capital*, Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, etc.) appeared in the 'sixties and 'seventies. They contain a systematic exposition of the ideas of scientific communism, which was derived from a profound study of human society and its history.

In the middle and end of the 'seventies, a few years after the disintegration of the First International, mass socialist parties began to be formed in Germany, France and other countries basing themselves on the views of Marx. As Lenin wrote:

"Marx was the genius who continued and completed the three chief ideological currents of the nineteenth century, represented respectively by the three most advanced countries of humanity. classical German philosophy, classical English political economy, and French Socialism combined with French revolutionary doctrines."

An essential and integral part of Marxism is dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism discerns the unity of the universe in its material nature. It regards the universe as eternal and infinite matter in a state of perpetual movement. Man is a product and definite part of material nature. Thought and cognition are products of the human brain. But, in contrast to the earlier mechanistic materialism, which merely attempted to explain the universe, Marx emphasised the practical and active side of his dialectical materialism, i.e., the necessity not merely of explaining the world, but of altering it.

From classical German philosophy Marx and Engels borrowed its dialectics, that all-embracing and profound doctrine of development, which regards the world not as a complex of eternal and unchanging things, but as a complex of processes.

"For it [dialectical philosophy]," Engels wrote in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*, "nothing is final, absolute, sacred. It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything, nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away, of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher." \*\*

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, "Karl Marx," *Marx-Engels-Marxism*, Moscow.

\*\* Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, p 22, Moscow

Marx, Engels and Lenin persistently emphasised the revolutionary nature of dialectics.

"In its mystified form," Marx wrote in his preface to the Second Edition of Volume I of *Capital*, "dialectics became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things. In its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up, because it regards every historically developed social form as an fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence, because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary."

The production relations of society and the mode of production of the material essentials of life correspond to a definite stage of development of material productive forces, and, in turn, determine the social, political and spiritual processes. When the development of the forces of production reaches such a stage as to conflict with the prevailing production and property relations, a revolution takes place, which destroys the old production relations and replaces them by new relations.

Men are the makers of their own history; but the motives by which they are guided are determined by their position in society, by the prevailing social production relations and by the class interests arising therefrom. The class struggle is the mainspring of history.

In *Capital* Marx undertakes a profound scientific analysis of the capitalist mode of production, the creation of commodities, their value as a social relation of production, the transformation of value into surplus value and the transformation of money into capital. He then goes on to analyse the accumulation of capital by means of the exploitation of the working class.

The accumulation of capital, by creating wealth at the one pole of society and poverty at the other, gives rise to a reserve industrial army. The conflict in capitalist society between the social nature of production and the private nature of appropriation results in periodical crises.

Competition between the capitalists leads to the concentration

of capital\* small capitalist enterprises are swallowed up by larger ones and powerful industrial units are formed. Marx calls the owners of such enterprises the magnates of capital.

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital . . . grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation, but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated" <sup>1</sup>

Marx deduces the transformation of capitalist society into a socialist society from the laws of development of capitalism itself. The physical medium of this transformation is the working class, by means of which the social revolution is effected. Between capitalism and socialism stretches the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, having overthrown the rule of the capitalist class, the working class establishes its own class dictatorship.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is an instrument for suppressing the resistance of the exploiters, for abolishing classes and creating a classless socialist society and subsequently for the bringing about of communism, under which the dictatorship of the proletariat, the last historical form of the state, begins to wither away.

The doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the most important doctrine of revolutionary Marxism.

The advanced Russian revolutionaries very early acquainted themselves with the chief works of Marx. The theoreticians of the revolutionary Narodniki and of the rebel anarchists, such as Lavrov and Bakunin, were fairly strongly influenced by Marxism. But they never succeeded in mastering it, nor in freeing themselves from the influence of the backward social relations existing in Russia at the time. Bakunin, supported by his Russian followers, waged a bitter struggle against Marx within the First International, a struggle which finally led to its disruption.

\* Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol I

Marx advocated the political organisation and political struggle of the working class. Bakunin obstinately opposed this view, declaring in favour of a spontaneous revolutionary movement which, by destroying the bourgeois economic system and the bourgeois state, would lead directly to the establishment of anarchist communism.

As Marxism spread in Western Europe, its influence also grew in Russia, where it found the soil already prepared by the economic development of the country, the growth of the working class both numerically and in class consciousness, and by the collapse of the rebel anarchist ideas of the Narodniki.

A group of prominent members of the Narodnik movement, who had not formed part of the Narodnaya Volya, having made several unsuccessful attempts to continue revolutionary work in Russia under the former Narodnik banner of the Cherny Peredel, and influenced by the experience of the work carried on among the workers in Russia, found themselves, while in exile abroad, impelled to undertake a revision of their former views. This group, consisting of Plekhanov, Axelrod, Vera Zasulich, Deutsch and Ignatov, having acquainted themselves with the working class movement of Western Europe, began gradually to incline towards Marxism. This evolution of views led to the formation of the Emancipation of Labour group in September 1883.

### *The Emancipation of Labour Group*

Plekhanov's pamphlet *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, published in 1883, may be regarded as the platform and manifesto of the Emancipation of Labour group. As the epigraph for this pamphlet Plekhanov took the famous dictum of *The Communist Manifesto*: Every class struggle is a political struggle.

The pamphlet expounds the view that socialism must be achieved by the political organisation and political struggle of the working class. The immediate aims in the struggle for socialism must be the overthrow of the autocracy and the achievement of political freedom. For this purpose the working class must be organised, in order that, after the overthrow of the autocracy, it may be in a position to carry on the fight for socialism. Thus

the attention of the revolutionary intelligentsia became centred on the working class.\*

Both Plekhanov and Axelrod were very much influenced by acquaintance with the socialist and working class movements of Western Europe and with the works of Marx and Engels (Marx died in 1883, the year in which the Emancipation of Labour group was formed)

In the spring of 1885, Plekhanov's pamphlet *Our Differences* appeared. In it we find an analysis of the economic situation of the time, which led Plekhanov to the conclusion that the future development of Russia would be associated with the development of capitalism and the working class, and that the working class would become the grave-digger of capitalism. Plekhanov subjected the revolutionary currents of the 'sixties, 'seventies and 'eighties to a detailed criticism, dissecting their erroneous views and explaining the causes of the failure of struggle against the tsarist government. In this pamphlet Plekhanov devoted particular attention to the *Narodovoltsi*, criticising the views of one of their most prominent literary representatives, Leo Tikhomirov. Tikhomirov later repented his revolutionary transgression against tsarism: he became a bigoted reactionary and the editor of the most reactionary journal in tsarist Russia, the notorious *Moskovskiyе Vedomosti*.

On the eve of his renegacy Tikhomirov was in charge of the organ of the *Narodnaya Volya*, in which he conducted a controversy against the Emancipation of Labour group. According to Tikhomirov the Emancipation of Labour group was devoting too much attention to the working class, whose part in the revo-

\* In his *Socialism and the Political Struggle* Plekhanov expressed the view that the socialist intelligentsia "must act as the leader of the working class in the future movement for emancipation . . . and must prepare it to act independently. Every effort must be exerted to encourage the Russian working class to come forward as an independent party immediately a constitution is achieved."

It will be seen that in 1883 Plekhanov was of the opinion that the working class could act as an independent force only after a constitutional government had been established. Until then the socialist intelligentsia were to prepare the elements for a future labour party, although the possibility was not excluded of the workers taking part in the revolutionary struggle against the autocracy under the leadership of the intelligentsia. Plekhanov thus assigned to the socialist intelligentsia the role of guardian and mentor of the working class. It is clear that Plekhanov at that time had not yet mastered the fundamental principles of Marxism.



lution could not be very large. What could the workers give the revolution?—Tikhomirov asked. He frankly expressed the view that the workers should be used in the interests of another class. That was not the way Plekhanov regarded the matter. Not the workers for the revolution, he objected in answer to Tikhomirov, but the revolution for the workers.

The first outline of the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group appeared in 1884. It was a mixture of Marxian views, relics of the views of the Narodniki and certain forms of pre-Marxian socialism. The programme pays tribute to the theories of the Narodniki, referring to the independent part played by the socialist intelligentsia in Russia. It favoured, also under the undoubted influence of the *Narodovoltsi*, the employment of terrorism as a political weapon. Following the Lassalleans, and in clear opposition to Marx and Engels, the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group advocates the granting of state aid to workers' producing co-operative societies as a means of fighting the capitalists within the capitalist system. This was taken from the Gotha Programme<sup>1</sup> of the German Social-Democrats adopted in 1875 as a result of a compromise with the Lassalleans<sup>2</sup> and was considered by Marx as sheer utopianism. At the same time, however, the programme laid emphasis on the part of the working class in the revolutionary movement. It declared that the central aim of the working class in all countries must be the seizure of the power of government. A subsequent variant of the programme, published in 1887, referred to the peasantry as an ally of the working class.

"Cast out of the village as an impoverished member of the commune," Plekhanov wrote, "the proletariat returns to it as a Social-Democratic agitator. His appearance in this role brings about a change in the hitherto hopeless lot of the commune. Its disintegration is inevitable only to the point when that very disintegration creates a new

<sup>1</sup> This programme, as we know, was mercilessly dissected by Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

<sup>2</sup> Lassalle and his followers pictured the realisation of socialism, not by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat but by parliamentary means, with the aid of universal suffrage, and also by means of workers' producing associations supported by the state. Lassalleanism was strongly tinged with nationalism. It has recently come to light that Lassalle became the direct agent of the German *Junker* Chancellor Bismarck. Lassalleanism was the historical predecessor of opportunist Social-Democracy, which, in its turn, grew into social-fascism.

popular force capable of putting an end to the domination of capitalism."

The programme regarded the "new force" that was to put an end to the reign of capitalism as consisting of the working class and the poorer sections of the peasantry led by the working class. But the Emancipation of Labour group did not understand the peasantry in the role of ally of the proletariat. The second variant of the programme declares that "the main bulwark of absolutism lies in the political indifference and the intellectual backwardness of the peasantry."

Two years after the appearance of the second variant of the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group, Plekhanov, at the Inaugural Congress of the Second International, pronounced his famous dictum:

"The revolutionary movement in Russia can triumph only as a revolutionary movement of the working class . . . There is not, nor can there be, any other way."

Here we find the working class described as the prime motive force of the future revolution. Thus, we find in the documents expounding the programme of the Emancipation of Labour group a number of theses that have greatly influenced the history of the Communist Party and of the working class movement in Russia. We find elements of the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolutionary movement against the autocracy and the idea of an independent political party of the working class. But these views did not receive adequate and precise formulation. The Emancipation of Labour group was unable to obtain a clear conception of the hegemony of the proletariat, since it underestimated the role of the peasantry in the revolutionary struggle and the ability of the working class to lead the peasantry, while, on the other hand, it overestimated the role of the bourgeoisie, which it regarded as the motive force of the revolution. It was only in the middle of the 'nineties that

<sup>4</sup>"My speech at the Paris International Congress of 1889," Plekhanov wrote in 1910 in his controversy with the liquidators, "expressed my unshakable conviction that the objective course of economic development in Russia would as surely as fate lead to the appearance of the proletariat as the leader of the struggle for emancipation from the old order, and that, consequently, the measure of our social progress and of our approach to political freedom would be the extent to which the proletariat was prepared to assume the role of hegemon in the struggle for emancipation."

the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat in the Russian revolution received proper formulation in the works of Lenin.

In connection with the famine of 1891, Plekhanov wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Ruin of Russia*, in which he argued the necessity for conducting a revolutionary struggle against the tsarist government, which was leading the country to destruction. Political emancipation offered the only hope of saving the country from economic ruin.

But Plekhanov's exposition of this central task was that of a liberal rather than of a revolutionary Marxist. The following passage from the pamphlet is characteristic in this respect.

"Honest Russians, not belonging to the world of business men, kulaks and Russian officials, and not seeking personal advantage from the disaster that has overtaken the nation, must immediately start an agitation for the summoning of a National Assembly with the view to transforming it into a Constituent Assembly, that is, of laying the foundations for a new social order in Russia."

In another of his pamphlets, *The Duty of the Socialists in the Famine*, Plekhanov thus treats the question of the motive forces of the revolution:

"But the bourgeoisie is not the only social force in our country acting as a menace to the autocratic monarchy. Wherever there is a bourgeoisie there is also a proletariat. The proletariat and the muzhik are political antipodes. The historic role of the proletariat is as revolutionary as the historic role of the muzhik is conservative. The muzhiks have been the support of oriental despotism for thousands of years. The proletariat in a comparatively short space of time has shaken the foundations of West European society."

On the one hand, we find the bourgeoisie ranked equally with the working class as a motive force of the revolution. On the other hand, here, as in many of his works, Plekhanov contrasts the peasantry to the working class, regarding the former as a reactionary force and as the bulwark of tsarism. It is also characteristic of Plekhanov's attitude that he considered the summoning of a National Assembly as equivalent to a confession of bankruptcy by the government, and as a concession wrested from the government by the inexorable march of historical events. If a National Assembly were summoned, "the fate of Russia would in fact immediately pass from the control of the tsar into the hands of the new revolutionary government."

Axelrod, the future theoretician-in-chief of the Mensheviks,

went even further than Plekhanov in his liberal opportunist interpretation of the tasks of the working class in the forthcoming revolution. In a number of articles written in the early 'nineties Axelrod also declared that the working class should seek the political support of the bourgeoisie and that only after the fall of tsarism would the class struggle of the workers against the bourgeoisie become possible.

The elements of opportunism in the works of the Emancipation of Labour group anticipated the viewpoint of the Mensheviks (including Plekhanov) regarding the course of the revolution at a time when the revolution had already become a fact, namely, in 1905.

Nevertheless, in spite of its incipient opportunism, the Emancipation of Labour group was the first Marxian organisation in Russia to express a Marxian opinion of capitalism, the village commune, the disintegration of semi-feudal economic forms and of the growth of class antagonisms, and to point out the historical role of the proletariat. In the works of Plekhanov the Emancipation of Labour group develops a Marxian view of the necessity of a political struggle for the conquest of political rights which would facilitate the fight for socialism. The Emancipation of Labour group helped to train a body of Marxists in Russia.

From the moment of its inception the Emancipation of Labour group set itself fairly energetically to the task of expressing its views in literary form. It published four volumes of a journal entitled *The Social-Democrat*, in which articles by Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich appeared.

The group also published a number of Russian translations of the works of Marx and Engels.

But all of these publications, beginning with the main works of Plekhanov, were read almost exclusively by exiles. The opponents of the Emancipation of Labour group and of Marxism made great play of the fact that the first Russian Marxist group was formed abroad and allegedly had no contacts with the movement in Russia, the implication being that Marxism could not be applied to Russian conditions and to the revolution in Russia. That, of course, was not true. Apart from the fact that the views of the Emancipation of Labour group were founded both on a study of the theory of Marx and the working class movement of Western Europe and on the experience of the revolution-

ary struggle in Russia, and primarily on an analysis of the economic situation of Russia, the group did have followers in Russia.

It is true that the brutal reaction established within the country after the destruction of the *Narodnaya Volya* group, and the apathy, disorganisation and demoralisation of broad sections of the revolutionary intelligentsia, were of so depressing a character that the ideas of the Emancipation of Labour group could not possibly meet with wide response on Russian soil. The group for a long time remained a small and insignificant sect. As a result of the first attempts of the group to establish direct contacts with Russia and at least to organise the smuggling of its literature into the country, Deutsch, one of its members, was arrested in Germany, handed over to the tsarist government and sentenced to a long term of penal servitude.

Nevertheless, even beneath the icy crust of the reaction of the 'eighties, political activity in Russia did not cease.

#### *Strike Movement in the 'Eighties and the Social-Democratic Circles*

The 'eighties were marked by the continued development of capitalism, the construction of new railways and the flow of fresh foreign capital into the industries of Russia. The construction of mills and the opening of mines proceeded with particular intensity in the Donets Basin and in the Ukraine generally. Strikes among the workers did not cease, although the political groups of the socialist intellectuals practically took no part in them. The 'eighties saw the famous strike of the weavers of the Morosov textile mills in Orekhovo-Zuevo, led by the socialist workers, Volkov and Moseyenko. The strike movement of the early 'eighties compelled the tsarist government to attempt to pacify the workers by promulgating a number of legislative acts for the "protection of labour." A factory inspection system was inaugurated and, generally, an attempt was made to create the impression that the government was concerned not only for the interests of the landlords and merchant class, but also for the interests of the workers.

Nevertheless, the working class movement was incapable of anything more than isolated and disconnected economic strikes. The gendarmes and the police brutally crushed the slightest

manifestation of working class activity. The movement was still very feeble, the working class had not sufficiently matured for an independent political revolutionary struggle and was still unable to assume the leadership of the equally immature peasant revolution. On the other hand, the revolutionary intellectuals who expressed the interests of the peasants and who, in the shape of the *Narodnaya Volya*, had attempted to conduct an independent revolutionary struggle, suffered severe defeat.

But beneath the heavy yoke of tsarism slow and imperceptible, but painstaking work was proceeding, laying the foundations of what was to be the future proletarian party. People in various parts of the country were analysing the economic situation of Russia and the past failure of the revolutionary movement, and were coming—gropingly and uncertainly, it is true—to the same conclusions as those arrived at by the Emancipation of Labour group in Geneva.

Chief among the followers of the Emancipation of Labour group within Russia was the Blagoev group, also known as the Party of Russian Social-Democrats. In the views of this group, as in the first published expressions of the views of the Emancipation of Labour group, we find fragments of the ideas both of the Narodniki and of the Lassalleans. Nevertheless, this group considered its chief duty to be to work among the working class, the revolutionary significance of which it recognised. The Emancipation of Labour group set up contacts with the Blagoev group. The second number of the paper, *Rabochy*, published by the latter, contained an article by Plekhanov, in which he called upon the working class to organise, in order that in face of the great events that were impending it should not remain “a mass of wretched slaves, at whom only those who were too lazy did not mock.”

In spite of the weakness of its theoretical views, the Blagoev group developed fairly considerable activity, judged by the standards of the time, and organised several workers' circles. The first arrests of its members did not halt its activities, although Blagoev himself was exiled to Bulgaria. It was not until 1887 that the tsarist gendarmes finally succeeded in smashing the Blagoev group.

Throughout the whole course of the 'eighties, isolated circles in various Russian cities were engaged in activities among the workers. True, they were so feeble, their work was so imperceptible, and the persecution of the government so drastic, that the

gendarmes of the tsar managed to root them up completely. Several decades elapsed before historical science unearthed the evidences of these groups and revealed the fact that they had carried on a great work under the most frightful conditions and had prepared the soil for the more extensive organisational work of the succeeding decade, from which the history of the Communist Party of Russia really begins.

Fairly considerable work, judged by the standards of the time, was carried on in the years 1886 to 1888 among the workers in St. Petersburg by a group led by Tochissky, who subsequently became a member of the Russian Communist Party and who perished in 1918. Hardly had the gendarmes succeeded in liquidating this group when a new group sprang up (1889), much stronger and much more numerous. It is known in the history of the Party as the Brusnev group, after the engineer Brusnev, one of its leaders. Recent investigations have thrown more light on the group and revealed the fact that it played a great and important part as a link between the first Social-Democratic circles in St. Petersburg in the 'eighties and the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class of the 'nineties.

Among the Brusnev group were a number of prominent workers, such as Bogdanov, Norinsky, Shelgunov and Fedor Afanasiev (the latter was killed by members of the Black Hundreds in Ivanovo-Voznesensk in 1905). The members of the group were arrested in 1892, but before that they had attempted to set up contacts with other cities. At that period, too, certain *Narodovoltsi*, who subsequently became Social-Democrats, were also carrying on work among the St. Petersburg workers. Among them were such future prominent members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as M. S. Olminsky and N. L. Meshcheryakov.

The activities of the propagandist circles among the workers at the end of the 'eighties were not confined to St. Petersburg alone. In 1888 an independent group of Social-Democrats was formed in Odessa, active members of which were Y. M. Steklov, Tsyperovich, Weltmann (Pavlovich). In Kharkov there was the group of Melnikov and Perazich, whose views consisted of a mixture of the ideas of the *Narodniki* and the Social-Democrats. In

Kiev there was the group of Doctor Abramovich, while in Kazan energetic work was carried on by Fedoseyev, with whom Lenin maintained direct contact. Lenin himself took part in the organisation of the first Social-Democratic circles in Kazan and Samara.

The fruits of this difficult and dangerous work, every achievement of which involved tremendous sacrifices, became palpable only at the beginning of the following decade.

### *The Origin of the Party*

At the beginning of that decade, the necessary elements already existed for the organisation in Russia of a revolutionary party with a Marxian programme. Capitalist development had created a numerous working class, principally concentrated in the large industries. Intolerable exploitation was driving the working class to resort to struggle. A certain amount of experience had already been gained in the strike movement for economic improvements. The working class already had a number—still very small, it is true—of its own leaders who clearly realised the connection between the burdensome conditions of the working class, on the one hand, and the capitalist system and the tsarist autocracy on the other. Socialist propaganda had struck roots in the working class and had found supporters. The collapse of Narodnik socialism, of rebel anarchism and of the terrorist illusions of the *Narodnaya Volya*, combined with the development of capitalism and the growth of the working class, had prepared the soil for the spread of Marxian ideas among the revolutionary intellectuals who had emerged from a different social stratum, and for the application of those ideas to the economic and political conditions of Russia. The Emancipation of Labour group, the first Social-Democratic group in Russia, had done much to spread Marxist propaganda in the country during that, as Lenin expressed it, intra-uterine period of Social-Democracy.

It must be noted, however, that even in the very earliest literary works of members of the Emancipation of Labour group we meet with expressions of views which show that the group failed properly to estimate the importance and significance of the peasantry in the revolutionary movement against tsarism, and on the other hand, overestimated the importance of the bourgeoisie in that movement. The peasantry is even some-



times regarded as a reactionary force. Such views were the result not merely of a reaction against the illusions of the Narodniki, but also of the influence exerted by the ideology of the bourgeoisie on the first attempts at theoretical Marxian thought in Russia, and formed the embryo of the future Menshevism of the founders of the Emancipation of Labour group. In the process of absorbing the experience of the proletarian movement of Western Europe, the Emancipation of Labour group acquired not only the revolutionary ideas of Marxism, but also the opportunist ideas of the Lassalleans, from which modern social-fascism has sprung.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FORMATIVE STAGES OF THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY

*Capitalist development in the 'nineties—Marxism combats Narodism—Lenin's "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight Against the Social-Democrats"—Lenin combats bourgeois distortions of Marxism—Lenin and Plekhanov on legal Marxism—The strike movement—Mass agitation—Lenin and the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class—Formation of the Bund—First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party—The beginnings of Economism—The essential nature of Economism—The Economists and the political struggle—Rabocheye Dyelo-ism—a species of Economism—Conditions favouring Economism—Change in spirit of the working class and the democratic intellectuals—Political strikes of 1902 and 1903—Zubatovism—Primitive methods become antiquated—Iskra*

#### *Capitalist Development in the 'Nineties*

It was only with great difficulty that our investigators have managed to uncover the roots of the tiny organisations, groups and circles that existed during the interval between the formation of the Blagoev group and the 'nineties, which saw the appearance of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. While in the 'nineties the work of these groups and circles was still in its first stages, capitalism was developing at a hitherto unknown speed. The output of pig iron during the period of 1890 to 1900 increased by 220 per cent, of iron ore by 272 per cent, and of oil by 179 per cent. The swift growth of industry was accompanied by a concentration of production. Thus, at the end of the 'nineties 5 per cent of the industrial enterprises employed 53 per cent of the total number of workers. Thanks to the protectionist policy of the tsarist government and the cheapness of labour, a large amount of capital was poured into Russian industry during these years by the West European bourgeoisie.

Lenin subsequently wrote:

"Imperialism, as the highest stage of capitalism in America and Europe, as later in Asia, was fully formed in the years 1898-1914." \*

\* Lenin, "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement," *Collected Works*, Vol XIX., New York

But a peculiarity of Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century was that side by side with capitalist imperialism the military and feudal imperialism of tsarist Russia also made itself strongly felt.

"Tsarist Russia was the home of every form of oppression—capitalist, colonial and military—in their most inhuman and barbaric form." \*

Developing capitalism in Russia formed ever closer contacts with the world capitalist system, which was then entering on its last stage—the *stage of imperialism*. The early 'nineties witnessed the beginnings of the formation of the political groupings within the camp of the imperialists which were to become the protagonists in the future World War. The development of capitalism in Russia was being more and more influenced by the gold millions derived from the French loans.

An inevitable concomitant of the development of capitalism in Russia was the ruin and impoverishment of the masses of the peasants. The process was intensified by survivals of the serf system. The peasants became impoverished because of insufficient land, and because they were squeezed by the landlord in the village and by the tsarist official from the town. The Russian state budget increased from year to year, attaining colossal proportions. Huge and growing sums were demanded from the state revenues for the army and navy, for the construction of railroads and for the repayment of loans. These expenditures imposed a tremendous burden on the peasant, forcing him to flee to the city, to migrate to Siberia, or else to languish in wretched and hopeless poverty. The effects of the ruin of the peasants following the "emancipation" from serf dependence were displayed to their full extent when the country was visited by the frightful famine of 1891, which revealed the desperate price tsarist Russia was paying for its economic development.

But such is the law of the capitalist system. The development of productive forces, the adoption of new and perfected methods of production, the development of large-scale industry and the growth of the proletariat are inevitably accompanied by the ruin, impoverishment and proletarianisation of the middle classes of the population, and primarily of the peasants.

It was now difficult for the Narodniki to treat as contro-

\* Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism," Moscow.

versial the question as to whether capitalism was, or was not, developing in Russia. The minds of large sections of the lower intelligentsia, who had formerly sympathised with the Narodniki, were now influenced by two factors: firstly, the hopeless situation of the peasants, who were apparently incapable of emerging unaided from the vice of economic need, and secondly, the obvious growth of the working class. Such were the facts of the economic situation of Russia as it appeared to the petty-bourgeois intellectuals (recruited from various sections of the population, but in the 'nineties mainly from the middle classes of the towns), whom the economic situation and the interests of the classes with whom they were associated drove into opposition to tsarism, and from among whom theoreticians of the revolutionary proletariat were already beginning to emerge.

The 'nineties were rife with acute controversies between the supporters of the Narodniki and the supporters of Marxism among the intelligentsia and the democratic students.

### *Marxism Combats Narodism*

By the 'nineties, the old Narodnik movement, which primarily expressed the interests of the peasantry, had as a result of the differentiation of the peasantry and the increase of kulak elements, and also under the influence of defeats suffered by the revolutionary movement, considerably changed its theoretical aspect. Among the Narodniki of the 'nineties, in contrast to those of the 'seventies and early 'eighties, we find increasing liberal and opportunist tendencies, an inclination to side with the liberal landlords and the liberal bourgeoisie, and to adopt a liberal policy of compromise in relation to the tsarist government.<sup>4</sup> The Narodniki began to turn their hopes towards the propertied classes and even towards the tsarist government. The Narodniki of the 'nineties expressed the view that the old and fundamental forms of

\* Bourgeois liberalism in Russia in the 'nineties was based chiefly on capitalist forms of agriculture, which were at that time developing and which had created a social and political base in the Zemstvos. The Zemstvos were rural local government bodies elected on a property qualification. Through the Zemstvos the agricultural bourgeoisie endeavoured to secure the opportunity of exerting organised influence on the policy of the tsarist government. It was the Zemstvos that originated the petitions for a constitution which Tsar Nicholas II, at the time of his coronation in 1895, characterised as "nonsensical dreams"

peasant life—the commune, the artel, etc.—must be preserved, and even further developed, by means of a “sensible” government policy.

In all this we perceive the dual character of the ideology of the Narodniki as representatives of the small property owners. Having suffered defeat in the revolutionary struggle against landlordism and the landlords’ state, they sought salvation from developing capitalism and the resulting disintegration of the peasantry in reactionary economic measures: artificial perpetuation of the communes, binding the peasants to the soil and so forth. In this they endeavoured to secure the support of the liberal landlords and even of the tsarist government.

Among the revolutionary Narodniki a conflict was taking place between the advocates of two different paths of capitalist development: the bourgeois liberal path and the revolutionary democratic, or peasant path. The first current of thought predominated in the Narodnik movement of the ’nineties, but the second current was by no means entirely extinguished.

The spiritual leader and “master mind” of the Narodniki of the ’nineties was a former member of the *Narodnaya Volya* party, the writer and critic, N. K. Mikhailovsky (died 1904). Mikhailovsky taught that the bearers of social progress must be the intellectuals, on whose initiative the salvation of the Russian people from the torments of capitalism would depend. Mikhailovsky criticised capitalism from the point of view of abstract “truth and justice,” arguing that capitalism maimed and disfigured mankind, that through the social and technical division of labour it was transforming the proletariat into a mere “toe” of the social body, whereas the peasant represented the ideal of a harmoniously developed human being. Mikhailovsky was a believer in the subjective method in sociology, according to which society develops not in conformity with objective laws, but in accordance with the “formulae of progress” invented by critically thinking individuals, and that, consequently, sociology must start out from some or other utopia. Subsequently, Mikhailovsky, like P. L. Lavrov, was elevated by the Socialist-Revolutionaries to the dignity of intellectual founder of their party.

Naturally, the anti-capitalist utterances of the Narodniki in no way altered the fact that they were representatives of the peasant petty bourgeoisie.

The tendency to terminate the revolutionary struggle of the two preceding decades was characteristic of the Narodniki of the 'nineties. This tendency of the Narodnik intellectuals, representing as they did the interests of the peasantry, reflected the realisation of the inability of the peasantry to conduct an independent revolutionary struggle against the landlords' state with any chance of success. The Narodnik movement of the 'nineties reflected the desire of the kulak sections of the peasantry to come to a compromise with the autocracy.

In the succeeding decade, when the rapid rise of the working class movement created favourable conditions for the revolutionary struggle of the peasantry, the Narodniki (then Socialist Revolutionaries) again assumed a revolutionary hue. It is extremely characteristic of Lenin that, while mercilessly exposing the opportunist tendencies that were strongly developed in the Narodnik movement of the 'nineties and its reactionary romanticism (its dreams that Russia might succeed in escaping capitalism and that the peasant communes could be perpetuated), nevertheless perceived in the Narodniki a revolutionary democratic force in the struggle against the autocracy. This view was strikingly corroborated by subsequent developments, particularly by the Revolution of 1905.

The revolutionary Marxists exposed the petty-bourgeois essence of the Narodnik movement. And indeed at every step their views were borne out by the facts. The Marxists declared that the destinies of the revolution must be bound up with the proletarian movement, which was spreading with the development of capitalism. The working class, as the basic revolutionary force and as the hegemon of the revolution, would lead the struggle of the peasantry against the landlords and against tsarism.

The Marxian and Social-Democratic colouring assumed by a vast number of the Russian intellectuals in the 'nineties by no means signified that they had all adopted the point of view of the working class. The vast majority of the intellectuals were in fact defenders of the interests of the bourgeoisie, for the sake of which they were compelled to seek an alliance with the working class and to deck their ideological signboard in the protective colouring of Marxism.

*Lenin's "What the 'Friends of the People' Are, and How They Fight Against the Social-Democrats"*

In their controversies with the Narodniki, the Marxians of the 'nineties argued that capitalism already existed in Russia and that its development was inevitable.

In 1894 the first great work of Lenin was illegally circulated in Russia. It was printed on a hectograph and entitled *What the "Friends of the People" Are, and How They Fight Against the Social-Democrats*.

This pamphlet gives the first developed criticism of the Narodnik movement from a consistently revolutionary Marxian point of view and formulates the tasks of the working class and of its vanguard, the revolutionary Social-Democrats.

"The political activities of Social-Democrats consist of assisting the development and organisation of the labour movement in Russia, of transforming it from the present state of sporadic attempts at protesting, 'riots' and strikes lacking a leading idea, into an organised struggle of the whole of the Russian working class directed against the bourgeois regime and striving towards the expropriation of the expropriators and the abolition of the social system based on the oppression of the toilers. At the basis of these activities lies the general conviction among Marxists that the Russian worker is the sole and natural representative of the whole of the toiling and exploited population of Russia . . ."

"It is on the working class that the Social-Democrats concentrate all their attention and all their activities. When the advanced representatives of this class will have mastered the ideas of scientific socialism, the idea of the historical role of the Russian worker, when these ideas become widespread and when durable organisations arise among the workers which will transform the present sporadic economic war of the workers into a conscious class struggle—then the Russian workers will rise at the head of all democratic elements, overthrow absolutism and lead the Russian proletariat (side by side with the proletariat of all countries) along the straight road of open political struggle towards the victorious Communist revolution." \*

*The "Friends of the People," etc.* is the first of Lenin's works in which he gives a developed exposition of the political views he had then arrived at (*i.e.*, in the early 'nineties). His position is a strictly Marxian one. But Lenin goes further: in this work we find an independent development of the Marxian theory. *The "Friends of the People"* contains a clear formulation of the idea

\*Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight Against the Social-Democrats," *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 454, Moscow.

of the hegemony of the proletariat in the forthcoming revolution. It also contains the theory of the democratic revolution in Russia growing into a socialist revolution. In *The "Friends of the People," etc.* Lenin with singular force and vehemence emphasises the reactionary influence exerted by the survivals of serfdom in Russia, inasmuch as they hindered the development of capitalism, the class struggle and the organisation of the proletariat. The book also expounds the idea of a revolutionary alliance between the working class and the peasantry.

"Social-Democrats will always support demands for the removal of these survivals of mediaeval relationships which cause economic and political stagnation. . . . But there is no doubt, however, that the land enclosures permitted under the peasant reform positively robbed the peasants for the benefit of the landlords and rendered a service to this great reactionary force. . . . Social-Democrats will most strenuously insist on the immediate return to the peasants of the land of which they have been deprived and the complete expropriation of the landlords—the bulwark of serf institutions and traditions." \*

Thus, in *The "Friends of the People," etc.* we already find many of the ideas of Leninism, which is the Marxism of the era of imperialism and of the proletarian revolution. This is the beginning of a new Leninist stage in the development of Marxism. *The "Friends of the People," etc.* therefore towers above the contemporary works of the Emancipation of Labour group, including those of Plekhanov, in which the influence of reformist and opportunist tendencies is clearly reflected.

Unfortunately, this brilliant work of Lenin, printed on a hectograph, was able to achieve only a very limited circulation. Only two of its parts are extant, the first and the third. The second part has not yet been recovered.

### *Lenin Combats Bourgeois Distortions of Marxism*

From about 1894-95, in addition to the illegally circulated Marxian literature, there began to appear a number of legal Marxian works. The censorship of the time was extremely strict. Marxian ideas, in legal literature, therefore, had to be disguised in the most indirect and metaphorical terms ("Aesopian language," as it was called), or else the emphasis of the argu-

\* *Ibid.*



ment had to be placed on such principles of Marxism as were least likely to meet with the objection of the tsarist censorship.

But the theory of Marxism, the system of revolutionary ideas of Marx, on which the principles of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat were founded, could not be propagated openly in legally circulated literature. Only certain of the ideas of Marx, those bearing on Russian conditions, could be more or less openly advocated, in particular the thesis that capitalism in Russia was developing in accordance with the laws of social development established by Marx. Such an argument was not considered a great crime by the tsarist censorship. The revolutionary Marxists argue that with the development of capitalism the working class is also developing, and that the way is being prepared for a social revolution. But the development of capitalism without a class struggle can be expounded from the point of view of the bourgeoisie.

And, indeed, we find that with the transference of Marxian ideas to Russian soil in the early 'nineties, and with the widespread circulation of those ideas by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals in the literature of the time, the capitalist bourgeoisie made deft use of Marxian phraseology in order to disguise their own class point of view. What they borrowed from Marx was the economic argument in favour of the development of capitalism in Russia, but slurred over the growing class antagonisms in capitalist society. A large number of people, more closely associated with the bourgeoisie than with the proletariat, adopted Marxism objectively with the sole purpose of proving the fact and inevitability of the development of capitalism and endeavoured to make the growing working class movement serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.

In 1894 *Critical Notes on the Economic Development of Russia* appeared. This book was the work of a future prominent Russian liberal, subsequently to figure as a minister of General Wrangel, Struve. In that book, Struve disclaimed infection by orthodox Marxism, but at the same time borrowed several of the theories of Karl Marx in order to demonstrate the inevitability of the development of capitalism in Russia. The book concludes with the significant phrase: "Let us confess our lack of culture and turn to capitalism for instruction." Such is the peculiar form Marxism assumed under the pen of Struve.

In this book Struve develops the view so typical of the bourgeois theoreticians to the effect that the state is a classless force, regulating relations between classes by means of reforms, whereas, as we know, according to Marxism, the modern state is an organisation of the class domination of the bourgeoisie. Throughout the book reformism is set up more or less openly in opposition to the revolutionary point of view. In that respect Struve is entitled to claim priority over Bernstein and the German revisionists.

Struve's book appeared in 1894. In the following year another book appeared, *The Development of the Monistic View of History*, the title of which was adapted to lull the vigilance even of the strictest censor (all Marxian books of the time had to resort to similar titles). But the book which bears this dreary title contains a brilliant exposition of certain of the fundamental philosophical, historical and economic views of Marx and Engels in the form of a polemic directed against the representatives of Narodism and liberalism (N. K. Mikhailovsky, N. Kareyev, and others). This book belonged to the pen of G. V. Plekhanov, writing under the pseudonym N. Beltov, and was literally sold out in three weeks.<sup>1</sup>

In the following year there appeared a collection of articles also bearing a learned and dreary title: *Material on the Question of the Economic Development of Russia*. But this time the censorship was not to be deceived, and the book had hardly seen the light when it was confiscated and burned. Only a few copies managed to escape the clutches of the censor. This book contained an article by *Tulin* (a *nom-de-plume* of Lenin), *The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. P. Struve's Book* (with the sub-title *The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature*).

In the article in question Lenin subjects the distortions of Marxism committed by Struve to detailed criticism.

Struve replaced the defence of the class interests of the proletariat by professorial "objectivism," which in reality served as a disguise for the defence of the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Thus, under the pen of Struve the proof of the inevitability of the development of capitalism in Russia becomes

<sup>1</sup> Under the pseudonym Volgin, Plekhanov later published another book entitled *The Justification of the Narodniki in the Works of M. Vorontsev* (V. V.) in which he criticised the economic views of the Narodniki.

transformed into a defence of capitalism. Lenin exposed a number of Struve's direct distortions of Marxism on the subjects of the state, over-population, the home market, etc.

Struve represented the modern bourgeois state as an organisation for the maintenance of order, and not as an organisation of the class domination of the bourgeoisie.

Equally apologetic of capitalism was Struve's attempt to represent the plight of the masses under capitalism, their poverty, unemployment, etc., as being not a result of the capitalist system itself, but a consequence of over-population (a too rapid growth of the population as compared with the development of the means of subsistence). We know to what annihilating criticism Marx in his *Capital* subjects the founder of this theory, the Reverend Malthus, who asserted that the workers alone were to blame for their misery, since they multiplied too rapidly.

Struve in his book declared that Russian capitalism needed foreign markets for its development. Therein spoke the future theoretician of the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie.

✓ Lenin exposed the bourgeois liberal significance of Struve's ✓ wholesale rejection of the programme of the Narodniki.

"...It would be an absolute mistake to reject the whole programme of the Narodniki without discrimination. We must draw a clear distinction between its reactionary and its progressive features. The Narodnik movement is reactionary inasmuch as it proposes measures which would tie the peasants to the land and to antiquated methods of production, such as the inalienable allotments, and so forth, and which would hamper the development of a money economy.... Unconditional war must, of course, be waged against such points in the Narodnik programme. But there are other points, such as self-government [Lenin is writing with the censorship in mind—N.P.], making knowledge widely and freely accessible to the 'people,' the 'elevation' of popular (viz, petty) industry with the aid of cheap credits, improved technical methods, the organisation of the sale of products, and so forth."\*

Such measures, Lenin declared, would not hamper, but, on the contrary, accelerate the economic development of Russia.

Here we already have an exposition of Bolshevik tactics towards the Narodnik parties in the revolution of 1905-07.

\* Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism," *Selected Works*, Vol. I

*Lenin and Plekhanov on Legal Marxism*

Struve's legal Marxism was essentially a reflection of the interests of the bourgeoisie. In the autumn of 1907, in his preface to a collection of articles entitled *Twelve Years*, Lenin thus referred to his attack on Struve, describing him as the chief representative of legal Marxism in Russia in the 'nineties:

"The end of 1894 and the beginning of 1895 witnessed a sharp change in the character of our legal literature. For the first time it began to express Marxian ideas, represented not only by members of the Emancipation of Labour group living abroad, but also by Social-Democrats within Russia. The outburst of literary activity and the heated controversies between the Marxists and the old leaders of the Narodniki, who hitherto had held almost undivided sway in advanced literature (for instance, N. K. Mikhailovsky), were the precursors of the rise of the mass working class movement in Russia.

"... The conditions of literary work at that time compelled the Social-Democrats to express themselves in Aesopian language and confine themselves to the most generalised propositions, as far removed as possible from practical life and politics. This circumstance particularly facilitated a union of the heterogeneous elements of Marxism against the Narodniki. In addition to the Social-Democrats, both within Russia and abroad, this conflict was carried on by such individuals as Messrs. Struve, Bulgakov, Tugan-Baranovsky, Berdyaev, and their like. These were bourgeois democrats, for whom the break with the Narodniki signified a transition from middle-class (or peasant) socialism not to proletarian socialism, as was the case with us, but to bourgeois liberalism." \*

Thus, the Marxian movement, which attracted wide sections of the Russian intelligentsia in the early 'nineties was from the very outset marked by profound dissensions. We have Struve on the one hand and Lenin on the other. But for the time being the controversy did not lead to a rupture, and the Marxian movement in the legal arena continued to maintain a united front against the Narodniki. But differences arose between Lenin and Plekhanov in relation to Struve from the very beginning of the "alliance" with legal Marxism. Plekhanov was much more tolerant than Lenin towards the bourgeois distortions of Marxism in Struve's book. Plekhanov, unlike Lenin, slurred over the revolutionary democratic aspect of the ideology of the Narodniki, and

\* Lenin, "Preface to the Symposium 'Twelve Years'," *Collected Works*, Vol. XII.

even went so far as to declare that Marxism had points in common with bourgeois liberalism, but none with the Narodniki. This opportunist viewpoint was subsequently expanded by the Mensheviks. We thus already observe in Plekhanov a tendency to rely on the liberal bourgeoisie. This signified a tendency to favour the liberal reformist method of reconstructing Russia. Unlike Plekhanov, Lenin clearly steers a course towards the triumph of bourgeois democratic revolution and the transformation of the latter into a socialist revolution.

In 1897 the journal *Novoye Slovo* (*The New Word*) began to appear, to which under various pseudonyms not only members of the Emancipation of Labour group contributed, but also individuals who had developed as Marxists within Russia itself. Among the latter the most prominent figure was Lenin.<sup>4</sup>

In 1898 an important work by Tugan-Baranovsky was published, entitled *The Russian Factory, Past and Present*. With the aid of facts and figures, and a vast store of historical material, Tugan-Baranovsky, controverting the Narodniki, showed how profound were the roots of capitalism in Russian economic life, and followed the development of capitalism phase by phase down to contemporary machine industry. Of particular interest are the chapters dealing with the development of Russian industry in the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century and the economic struggles of the working class even at that remote period. Contrary to the Narodniki, who idealised the craft industries as a specific form of "folk industry" having nothing in common with capitalism and compared them with the peasant commune, Tugan-Baranovsky shows that the craft industries, no less than the factories, are a product of the development of capitalism. The final chapters of the book, dealing with contemporary industry, are far less effective and the whole book abounds in distortions of Marxism, particularly on the question of the class struggle.

In the following year Lenin's famous work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* appeared. It was begun in prison and was ended in exile in Siberia.\* The book presents a profound

\* Among the contributors to the *Novoye Slovo* were Lenin, Plekhanov, Zasulich, A. N. Potresov, Struve, Tugan-Baranovsky, Martov and Maxim Gorky.

\*\* The book appeared under the pseudonym V. Ilyin.

theoretical analysis of the development of capitalism in Russia and shows that, contrary to the opinion of the Narodniki and of certain of the legal "Marxists," particularly Struve, capitalism in Russia was itself creating a home market. The outstanding feature of the book is its masterly analysis of contemporary Russian economic conditions, particularly in relation to agriculture and to the process of differentiation among the peasantry, as well as of the influence of the survivals of the serf system, on which subject Lenin had already written in his *Friends of the People*. In this book Lenin revealed himself as a first-class Marxian theoretician and a brilliant student of the agrarian problem in Russia and the specific economic conditions of its various regions.

Thus, in the 'nineties, in contrast to the 'eighties, we find a widespread development of Marxian ideas among the intelligentsia. Frequently, Marxian ideas served as a cloak for bourgeois ideology. Moreover, among the Marxians themselves profound differences of principle were making themselves apparent. These differences were not fully revealed in the years 1894 and 1895, but they subsequently became unmistakable, until, at the very end of the century, a number of representatives of what was known as legal Marxism declared their open and definite rupture with Marxism. Lenin declared that legal Marxism, that "reflection of Marxism in bourgeois literature," was closely associated with the reformist tendencies of the Social-Democrats of Western Europe. Like the reformist revisionists of Western Europe, the legal Marxists were opposed to the revolutionary theory and tactics of Marxism and were hostile to the endeavour to form an independent revolutionary movement of the working class and to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin's consistent fight against legal Marxism was directed against all opponents of Marxism both in Russia and in Western Europe. Hence, Lenin's fight against legal Marxism and its theoreticians was of vast international significance.

In 1894 Struve airily declared that he was not infected with the disease of orthodoxy and invited Russia to turn to capitalism for instruction. The adulterated Marxism of Struve was a product suitable to the needs of the bourgeois intellectuals. Later works of Struve, Bulgakov, Tugan-Baranovsky and Berdyaev made attempts to further falsify Marxism. The effect was to de-

prive Marxism of its philosophical materialistic basis and to replace it by Kantian idealism, which served as a "scientific" justification for doping the people with religious ideas. The next step was the attempt to emasculate the economic doctrines of Marx and to render them innocuous from the point of view of the bourgeoisie. The legal "Marxists" endeavoured to prove that Marx's labour theory of value, which is bound up with the theory of surplus value and the proof of the exploitation of the working class in capitalist society, is tendentious. They worked out a new theory of capitalist development, according to which crises would in time become less acute and finally disappear entirely; capitalist society was not moving towards catastrophe; agriculture was not developing in accordance with the theories of Marx, but, on the contrary, large-scale agriculture was yielding place to small-scale agriculture, the level of well-being of the small peasant was rising and so on, and so forth.

### *The Strike Movement*

The rapid development of capitalism and of the working class movement serves as a background for the theoretical disputes between the revolutionaries and the legal "Marxists."

This period was marked by the widespread strike movement which accompanied the economic boom of the 'nineties. At the beginning of the decade the strike movement assumed a mass character. A number of strikes took place in 1892 in the Donets Basin, Lodz, Warsaw and Riga and throughout the Western region among the Jewish artisans, who, owing to national oppression, were politically very active, in spite of the backward nature of the small industries in which they were engaged.

In 1895, a big strike broke out among the textile workers of Yaroslavl, and was savagely crushed by the tsarist government.

In June 1896 a strike, unprecedented in its dimensions and degree of organisation, seized on the textile mills of St. Petersburg. In this strike 35,000 workers participated.

The equanimity of the tsarist government was shaken by this strike to such a degree that the Ministry of Finance, headed by Witte, drafted a law at a speed hitherto entirely unknown to

the tsarist government (the drafting of legislation usually took years, and even decades), which fixed the legal working day for adult workers at eleven and a half hours. This law was promulgated on June 2, 1897.

This was still a long way from the eight-hour day, but the effect of the law was to bring home to the working class the tremendous importance of its revolutionary activity. Indeed, legislation did not halt the strike movement, as is shown by the fact that 17,000 workers were involved in various strikes in 1894; 48,000 in 1895; 67,000 in 1896; 102,000 in 1897; 87,000 in 1898 and 130,000 in 1899.

As we have seen, Social-Democratic circles were already existing in the latter part of the 'eighties, when the influence of Marxian ideas on the intellectuals, not to speak of the working class, was inconsiderable. It was only natural that the number of these circles should begin to increase rapidly in the early 'nineties, when Marxian ideas began to spread widely. There were dozens of Marxist circles in St. Petersburg, Moscow and other cities in the beginning of the 'nineties and the participation of workers in these circles was becoming a common feature. Numerous prominent propagandists emerged from the ranks of the intellectuals at this period. Among them may be mentioned Fedoseyev, with whom Lenin maintained a lively correspondence.

In the industrial cities propaganda was reaching ever growing numbers of workers. The circles were particularly numerous in the Western regions of Russia, among the Jewish artisans, who were better educated and more developed than most of the Russian workers of the time. There were many Marxists among the Jewish intelligentsia, who were driven to revolution by the ferocity of national oppression.

In its early stages the work of the Social-Democrats was confined to propaganda within the circles, but as time went on the movement resorted to methods of mass agitation.

### *Mass Agitation*

The Social-Democratic groups and circles, which hitherto had confined themselves exclusively to propaganda work, now began to assume leadership of the strike movement. It had become patent to all that work within the circles was not enough. The



circles trained a few capable workers, but were unable to influence the masses. That explains why the circles so quickly abandoned mere propaganda work for mass agitation among the workers on the basis of economic demands and in connection with the strike movement that had now become widespread.

In 1894 a pamphlet was issued in Vilna entitled *Agitation*, written by a future prominent Bundist, Kremer, and edited by Martov. The pamphlet argued that the Social-Democratic organisations must engage in agitational work among the workers based on their concrete economic needs. But the pamphlet completely dissociated economic agitation from political agitation. It even failed to point out the necessity for a political organisation of the advanced sections of the working class—a profound opportunist error, later seized upon and made use of by the Economists.

In St. Petersburg the Social-Democrats began to engage in mass agitation independently and on their own initiative. At that time a strong and highly qualified group of Social-Democrats existed in St. Petersburg headed by Lenin. Many of Lenin's writings of that period—his pamphlet *On Fines*, leaflets written partly while he was still at liberty and partly in prison after his arrest in 1895—deal with elementary economic demands of the workers. But unlike the author of the pamphlet *Agitation*, Lenin links up these demands with the general political situation and the general condition of the working class under capitalism and tsarism.

After Lenin's arrest, the group in which Lenin was active assumed in 1896 the name of *The St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class*. It set the example for the formation of similar leagues in many other cities such as Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kiev and Ekaterinoslav. In addition to these in 1896 and 1897 Social-Democratic organisations existed in Odessa, Kharkov, Tiflis, Riga, Nizhni-Novgorod, Samara, Voronezh, Nikolayev and Rostov-on-Don.

### *Lenin and the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class*

The St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, which was formed in the middle of the 'nineties and which was led by Lenin, and the Emancipation

Leagues in a number of other cities carried on economic agitation among the workers. Their activities, however, must by no means be confused with what was known as Economism, even though the Leagues for the Emancipation of the Working Class were the first to undertake economic agitation on a wide scale.

While engaging in economic agitation, the Emancipation Leagues in no way minimised the importance of the political struggle.

"Social-Democracy," Lenin declared in his *What Is To Be Done*, "appeared in the world as a social movement, as the rising of the masses of the people, as a political party. . . . The intelligentsia . . . became entirely absorbed in the fight against the Narodniki, in going among the workers, and the latter, in their turn, were entirely absorbed in fomenting strikes. The movement made enormous strides. The majority of the leaders were very young people who had by no means reached the 'age of thirty-five,' which to N. Mikhailovsky appears to be a sort of natural borderline. Owing to their youth, they proved to be untrained for practical work and they left the scene with astonishing rapidity [owing to arrests—NP] But in the majority of cases the scope of their work was extremely wide. Many of them began their revolutionary thinking as Narodovoltsi. Nearly all of them in their early youth enthusiastically worshipped the terrorist heroes. It was a great wrench to abandon the captivating impressions of these heroic traditions and it was accompanied by the breaking off of personal relationship with people who were determined to remain loyal to Narodnaya Volya and for whom the young Social-Democrats had profound respect. The struggle compelled them to educate themselves, to read the illegal literature of all tendencies and to study closely the question of legal Narodism. Trained in this struggle, Social-Democrats went into the labour movement without for a moment forgetting the theories of Marxism which illumined their path, or the task of overthrowing the autocracy" \*

The St. Petersburg League of Struggle assumed the leadership of the mass struggle of the proletariat. Lenin—the initiator and leader of the League—went about the factories and workers' dwellings in order to learn the conditions of the workers and their growing discontent against unrestricted exploitation. He would thereupon draw up leaflets for the workers in these factories showing how to resist the employers and the tsarist government. The League headed a big strike of St. Petersburg textile workers in 1896, embracing 30,000 workers. In December 1895 Lenin was arrested, but maintained contact from his prison with

\* Lenin, "What is to be Done," *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow

workers belonging to the League (Babushkin, Shelgunov, and others), wrote leaflets and gave instructions as to the conduct of the work of the League.

The first draft Social-Democratic programme was drawn up by Lenin in 1896, while still in prison. The main theoretical principles of the draft were formulated in the spirit of revolutionary Marxism and strongly stressed the growth of class conflicts in capitalist society. The draft considered the main duty of the Russian workers to be the overthrow of the tsarist despotism and the conquest of political freedom. It drew the attention of the working class to the necessity for an alliance with the revolutionary peasant movement and put forward a number of concrete demands, chiefly directed against the survivals of serfdom. The draft programme is permeated with the idea of a single centralised party for the whole of Russia. The demand for the fusion of the existing groups and leagues into a single party also occupied a prominent place in the report made by the Russian Social-Democrats to the International Socialist Congress held in London in 1896.

Lenin's pamphlet *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* (1897) formulated the objects of the political struggle with the clarity and precision characteristic of Lenin. This excellent pamphlet is the first instance in Russian Social-Democratic literature in which armed insurrection is advocated as a means of putting an end to tsarism, which the party must carry through by assuming the leadership of the working class. The pamphlet bluntly declared that the moment had arrived for uniting the isolated and dispersed circles and Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class into a single Social-Democratic Party. We thus see that Lenin as early as 1897 called for a party such as was actually formed in Russia only in 1903. But already at that time the demand for such a party followed from the aims of the developing struggle of the working class.

### *Formation of the Bund*

In 1897, at a congress in Vilna, a Jewish Social-Democratic organisation was formed, known as the *General Jewish Labour League of Lithuania, Poland and Russia*, or the *Bund*. This organisation was formed by the union of groups active in various

cities and, as we see from its title, covered a fairly wide territory, viz., Poland, Lithuania and the western part of Russia. The Bund consisted mainly, if not entirely, of Jewish artisans, and was a movement of those semi-proletarian elements who stand with one foot in the camp of the working class and the other in the camp of the petty bourgeoisie. Petty-bourgeois opportunism marked the whole course of the activities of the Bund. It is noteworthy that Martov, who subsequently became the leader of opportunist Menshevik parties, and who after the October 1917 Revolution definitely adopted a counter-revolutionary position, began his activities in the region covered by the Bund. Noteworthy also is the close and long-standing alliance that was later formed between the Bund and the Mensheviks.

At the close of the 'nineties the Bund was a large Social-Democratic organisation. It had a fertile soil on which to work, owing to the frightful condition of the Jewish workers and the Jewish petty bourgeoisie, who were compelled to live within certain prescribed areas, known as the Pale (outside the Pale no Jew was allowed to reside, with the exception of big capitalists and university graduates), and owing also to other limitations and oppressions to which the Jews were subjected.

### *First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*

On March 14, 1898, there was held in Minsk what came to be known as the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, at which were represented the St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Ekaterinoslav Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, the *Rabochaya Gazeta* (*Workers' Gazette*) group which then existed in Kiev, and the Bund.\*

The composition of the Congress was thus very limited. It sat for a very brief period, three days in all, and confined itself to forming a party, electing a central committee (consisting of Eidelman, Kremer and S. I. Radchenko) and resolving to issue a manifesto.

\* The representatives at the Congress from the various groups were as follows: the St Petersburg League, S. I. Radchenko, the Moscow League, Vanovsky; the Kiev League, Tuchapsky, the Ekaterinoslav League, Petrusevich, the *Rabochaya Gazeta* Group, Eidelman and Vigdorchik; the Bund, Kremer, Katz and Mutnik.

The manifesto of the First Congress set forth certain of the principles of the Social-Democratic programme. It declared that:

"The proletariat is born together with capitalism, grows up with it, and gains in strength, and as it grows comes into ever more frequent collision with the bourgeoisie. The nearer to the East, the more feeble, timid and unscrupulous does the bourgeoisie become in politics, and the greater are the cultural and political tasks that fall upon the proletariat. The broad backs of the Russian working class must and will carry the burden of the struggle for political freedom."

But the manifesto failed to emphasise such an important question as the need for a dictatorship of the proletariat, or to deal with the question of the allies of the proletariat in the revolutionary struggle. In its decision on questions of organisation the First Congress did not lay emphasis on the need for a centralised party; on the contrary, it sanctioned the federal principle in relation to the Bund, which virtually retained complete autonomy and independence of the Party. This principle left the Bund free to develop its opportunist tendencies both in regard to the programme and in regard to tactics and organisation.

The Congress decided to transform the *Rabochaya Gazeta*, published in Kiev, into the central organ of the Party. It empowered the Central Committee to establish contact with other parties and organisations. Another decision of profound and fundamental importance was the recognition of the right of every nation to self-determination, a decision destined to exert great influence on the subsequent activities of the Russian Party. This decision was taken on the basis of the resolution of the International Socialist Congress held in London in 1896, by which all socialist parties were enjoined to work for the right to self-determination of all nations.

Hardly had the participants in the Congress returned to their homes when they were arrested. Simultaneously, arrests were effected in every centre where the movement was of any importance, and on a scale hitherto unwitnessed in Russia. The First Congress proclaimed the formation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party; but the newly created all-Russian Party organisation was immediately annihilated. Five years elapsed before it could be restored.

The Congress at which the Russian Party was actually constituted was not the First Congress, but the second. It was at

this Second Congress that Bolshevism originated as a political current and as an organised party.

### *The Beginnings of Economism*

The mass arrests of its leaders and active workers devastated the ranks of the Social-Democratic movement. Sooner or later every leader of the Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class was consigned either to imprisonment or exile. Their places were gradually taken over by the younger generation of practical workers in the Social-Democratic movement.

Among them were many who were under bourgeois influence and who regarded Marxism merely as a theory which explained and justified the development of capitalism in Russia.

The Social-Democratic organisations were overtaken by "a period of disorganisation, dissolution and vacillation"; what was known as Economism made its appearance—an opportunist current in the Russian Social-Democratic movement and the direct precursor of Menshevism.

The Russian movement began to feel more positively the influence of the revisionist movement that had begun in Western Europe, known as Bernsteinism. This movement was a product of the influence of the bourgeoisie and found a most favourable soil among the intellectuals who had been drawn within the current of legal "Marxism."

Bernsteinism in Western Europe was a form of bourgeois ideology disguised by Marxian phraseology. It was a means by which the bourgeoisie attempted to establish its influence over the Social-Democratic parties through their leaders, whose ties were closest with the labour aristocracy and the middle classes. As we have stated, the views of the Bernsteinists were similar to those of the legal "Marxists" in Russia. Bernsteinism was based on belief in evolutionary methods and the peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. Bernsteinism rejected such revolutionary ideas of Marxism as the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat (which, as Lenin taught, is the most essential doctrine in Marxism), the growing conflict of class interests, the inevitability of the social revolution and the necessity for an independent party of the working class, capable of opposing the

bourgeois parties and of fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Bernsteinism asserted that the conflict of class interests in capitalist society would grow less and less acute, and the position of the working class would steadily improve. The working class need not resort to revolutionary methods; legal methods, such as the parliamentary struggle and the economic pressure exerted on capitalism by the trade union movement, were entirely adequate for the achievement of its aims. Such methods, aided by the gradual organic growth of capitalism into socialism, by years of evolution, by the progressive amelioration of class conflict and the growing ties between the capitalists and the workers, would result in the socialist transformation of society along entirely peaceful lines.

The opportunist views of the Bernsteinists were a discovery for a large number of petty-bourgeois intellectuals associated with the Marxian Social-Democratic movement, into whose hands the control of the majority of the Social-Democratic organisations had fallen, at a time when the working class was making its first attempts to assert its political and class independence. The opportunist theories of the legal "Marxists" in Russia were supported by authoritative leaders of European Social-Democracy, including Bernstein himself.

Opportunism in questions of theory led to opportunism in practice.

Such were the roots of what was known as Economism. Economism was the practical expression of legal "Marxism." Its aim was to transform the Russian working class into an instrument of the bourgeoisie.

The 'nineties were an extremely important period in the history of Russia. They witnessed an unprecedented expansion of capitalism, which wrought profound changes not merely in the economic structure of the country, but in every sphere of social life, and definitely began to draw Russia into the orbit of the world imperialist economic system. It is characteristic of the period that the capitalist city began to occupy a prominent place in Russian literature, particularly in the works of Gorky.

The working class movement in the 'nineties became an important factor in the life of the country. The participants in economic strikes increased to tens and scores of thousands. Marxism became widely popular among the revolutionary intel-

lectuals and began to exert profound influence on the workers. Thousands of workers joined the Social-Democratic organisations, which sprang up in every important centre. There, organisations set up contact among themselves and in 1898 united to form a national party. But the Party soon collapsed. The working class of Russia in the 'nineties was still backward, politically and culturally. Its members were but recently peasants and still suffered from the cramping heritage of the serf system. The working class of Russia, among whom Lenin in the early 'nineties began his activities, was culturally and politically still behind its class comrades in Europe. It was difficult to foresee that it would anticipate the latter in the seizure of political power. Only in the following decade did the peasant revolutionary movement, subsequently to become the ally of the working class, begin to make its influence seriously felt.

Large numbers of intellectuals were drawn towards Marxism and Social-Democracy in the 'nineties (we are referring to the revolutionary Marxists, the ideologists of the proletariat) and helped the working class movement to form its revolutionary class character. But a section of the intelligentsia opened the way for the influence of bourgeois ideas within the working class movement, finding its expression in legal Marxism and in Economism. The effect was to delay the working class resorting to an independent political struggle. It also delayed the organisation of the vanguard of the working class into a Bolshevik party and the assumption by that party of the role of leader of the revolutionary movement against tsarism.

### *The Essential Nature of Economism*

The opportunist and reformist tendency in legal Marxian literature, represented by Struve, Tugan-Baranovsky and their like, as distinguished from the tendency of Lenin and partly of Plekhanov, came to be known as legal Marxism. It comprised a definite system of views, the object of which was to explain and justify the capitalist phase of social development in Russia; and generally to present the capitalist system in the most favourable light. Legal "Marxism," therefore, was obviously in no way noxious to the interests of the bourgeoisie, with whom it had no difficulty in living on fairly good terms.



The adaptation of the practical forms of the Social-Democratic movement to the interests of the bourgeoisie marked a new phase in the history of opportunism in Russia and became known by the name of Economism. Economism was a fairly widespread tendency among the active workers in the Social-Democratic movement at the end of the 'nineties. In October 1897, a few months prior to the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in Minsk, a paper was founded in St. Petersburg entitled *Rabochaya Mysl* (*Workers' Thought*) and edited by Takhtarev (also known as Tar) and Lokhov (Olkhin).

From the very first number the *Rabochaya Mysl* urged that the struggle of the workers must be directed towards the improvement of their material conditions. The duty of the working class movement is to agitate for such economic improvements, and not to fight for abstract ideals or in the interests of future generations, as was literally stated in one of the articles in the *Rabochaya Mysl*. No, the workers must understand that the fight is being fought on their behalf and on behalf of their children, and that this fight is already resulting in tangible economic improvements.

The Economists did not share the view of Lenin and the old guard of the League of Struggle that agitation on behalf of the economic needs of the working class, apart from its immediate aims, was a method of approach to the working class and of drawing it into the political struggle.

For the Economists the economic struggle was an end in itself; the Social-Democratic movement had no other meaning. They violently rejected all assertions that the working class movement had independent political aims to pursue.

It will be asked, what was there in this favourable to the interests of the bourgeoisie? If the Economists were out for the defence of the economic needs and interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie, why do we regard Economism as an expression of bourgeois influence over the proletariat?

But what, in reality, was the political significance of thus narrowing the scope of the working class movement and confining it entirely to an economic struggle?

The effect, in the first place, was to reject the political revol-

ution, or at least to postpone it to some vague future date. The literary productions of the Emancipation of Labour group gave prominence to the idea of a political revolution, of the overthrow of the autocratic monarchy, although this idea was presented in an opportunist form. The same idea formed the centre and basis of the views of the Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. It found expression in the manifesto of the First Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. and in Lenin's pamphlet, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, published in 1897 shortly before the appearance of the first number of *Rabochaya Mysl*. The Economists, however, simply ignored this idea.

But what about the political struggle? Ought it to be waged by the working class? The Economists' answer was that economic improvements would in effect give the workers all that the political struggle could give them. The famous dictum of the *Communist Manifesto* that "every class struggle is a political struggle" was interpreted by the Economists in the sense that economic struggles waged by the workers in individual factories and workshops were class struggles, and therefore political struggles against the bourgeoisie.

The fundamental idea running through the whole of Bernstein's book *The Premises of Socialism*, and presented by him in endless variations, was that the movement is everything, the final aim nothing. The activities of the Social-Democrats must be concentrated on securing small reforms from the bourgeoisie by voluntary agreement, small additions to wages, and so forth. The same was true of the Economists: the whole thing for them was the "movement," in the sense of securing small concrete improvements in the economic condition of the working class. They entirely lost sight of the aim, not merely the final aim of socialism, but even the immediate political aim—the overthrow of the autocracy. The result was to emasculate the revolutionary working class movement, and that, of course, served the interests not of the working class, but of the bourgeoisie. It gave the bourgeoisie the monopoly of the political struggle. Obviously, with such a policy there could be no question of the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolutionary movement, for the necessity of the revolutionary movement itself was denied.

*The Economists and the Political Struggle*

The views of the *Rabochaya Mysl* were soon disseminated not only throughout St. Petersburg, but also throughout the other centres of the Social-Democratic movement.

About a year after the *Rabochaya Mysl* was founded, appeared what was known as the *Credo*. The *Credo* was drawn up by Kuskova (who is today an active counter-revolutionary and White Guard émigré) and in a way represented a systematic exposition of the views of the Economists. In the *Credo* we find the statement that in the Russia of that day all talk of the necessity for an independent political party and for the working class waging an independent struggle was simply transplanting alien ideas to Russian soil. True, Social-Democratic labour parties in Western Europe carry on a political struggle, but that is because the soil there is favourable. In Russia at the present time the soil is not favourable, because the working class is too backward.<sup>1</sup> Who then was to carry on the political struggle? And was there any necessity for fighting the autocratic government? In the *Credo*, Kuskova answered these questions affirmatively. She said that a struggle was necessary, but not a revolutionary struggle. What was needed was a struggle similar to the one fought by the bourgeois liberals, by the moderate opposition press, by the Zemstvo assemblies, and by various legal societies. The opposition of these groups would, in the long run, compel the tsarist government to grant concessions. The opposition must consist of the liberal bourgeoisie and the liberal intelligentsia; the duty of the Social-Democrats was to support them. When the liberal bourgeoisie succeeded in achieving a constitution, a legal workers' party could be formed which would continue to support the bourgeoisie. Thus in the works of the Russian Economists, and particularly in the *Credo*, we find clearly reflected the future idea of the Mensheviks that the working class

\* The *Credo* advocated the postponement of the formation of a political party of the Bernstein type until the time when as a result of the liberal opposition movement the country would be endowed with a constitutional system. Subsequently, in the days of the reaction that followed the 1905 Revolution, this idea was resurrected by the Menshevik Liquidators, who proposed that the illegal Social-Democratic Party should be dispersed and that, under the leadership of the liberal bourgeoisie, a campaign should be fought for legality.

movement must be subordinated to the liberal bourgeoisie. The attitude of the *Credo* to the socialist movement of Western Europe was purely reformist. In the *Credo* we read:

"The aim of the Social-Democrats, which formerly was the seizure of political power and the revolutionary remoulding of capitalist society, has now been reduced to the reform of modern society in a democratic sense and in conformity with the state of affairs existing at the present day."

The final conclusion recommended by the *Credo* to the Russian Marxists is formulated briefly and concisely, namely,

"to assist the proletariat in its economic struggles and to participate in the activities of the liberal opposition"

The *Credo* aroused the most vigorous protest of the revolutionary section of the Russian Social-Democratic movement, most of the members of which at that time were in exile. The author of the written protest against the *Credo*, known as *The Protest of the Seventeen*, was Lenin, who, after a long term of imprisonment had been condemned to exile in the Minusinsk District of the Yenisei Province of Siberia.

"Russian Social-Democracy," we read in this remarkable document, "must declare determined war against the whole circle of ideas expressed in the *Credo*, for these ideas lead to this prospect becoming a fact . . .

"The labour movement keeps to the narrow rut of purely economic conflicts between the workers and employers and, in itself, taken as a whole, is not of a political character, but in the struggle for political liberty the progressive strata of the proletariat follow the revolutionary circles and factions formed by the so-called intelligentsia" \*.

With equal vigour and energy Lenin reacted during the period of his exile to another document of the Economists known as the *Profession de Foi* (Profession of Faith), emanating from the K iev Committee at the end of 1898 or the beginning of 1899, and containing ideas similar to those developed in the *Credo*. He wrote:

" 'The Russian workers in the mass,' we read [i.e., in the *Profession de Foi*—Trans.], 'have not yet matured for the political struggle.' If that is true it is equivalent to a death sentence on Social-Democracy as a whole, for it means that the Russian workers in the mass have not yet matured for Social-Democracy. As a matter of fact, nowhere in the world

\* Lenin, "Protest of the Russian Social-Democrats," *Selected Works*, Vol I, p 596. Moscow

is there, or has there ever been, a Social-Democratic movement which is not completely and inseparably bound up with the political struggle. Social-Democracy divorced from the political struggle is like a river without water, it is a howling contradiction, it means a return to the utopian socialism of our forebears, who scorned politics, or to anarchism, or to trade unionism."<sup>\*</sup>

In an article on the *Profession de Foi* of the Kiev Committee, (this article was first published only in 1928) Lenin gives an extremely neat definition of the relations between the political and economic struggles from the point of view of the revolutionary Social-Democrats, as opposed to the opportunism of the Economists:

"For the socialist the economic struggle serves as a basis for the organisation of the workers into a revolutionary party and for consolidating and developing their class struggle against the capitalist system. If the economic struggle is to be regarded as something self-sufficing, it becomes deprived of all socialist significance. The experience of West European countries provides numerous examples not only of socialist, but also of anti-socialist trade unions. .

"The aim of bourgeois policy is to assist the economic struggle of the proletariat, the aim of the socialist is to compel the economic struggle to aid the socialist movement and contribute to the success of the revolutionary workers' party."<sup>\*\*</sup>

### *Rabocheye-Dyelo-ism—a Species of Economism*

In 1898, the year in which the *Credo* appeared, there was founded abroad a journal called the *Rabocheye Dyelo* <sup>\*\*\*</sup> (*The Workers' Cause*) which served as the organ of a body known as the League of Russian Social-Democrats.

The League of Russian Social-Democrats was formed in 1895 and was made up partly of young Social-Democratic émigrés. Opportunist elements had gradually assumed the upper hand in the League, with the result that the Emancipation of Labour group, which advocated the political struggle, in 1898 refused to edit the productions of the League, and in 1900 entirely left

\* Lenin, *Miscellany*, Vol VII .

\*\* *Ibid.*

\*\*\* The editorial board of the *Rabocheye Delo* consisted of a famous trio. one was a prominent leader of the Economists of St Petersburg, residing abroad at the time, B Krichevsky, the second was Akimov-Makhnovetz, who subsequently, during the Revolution of 1905, took up a position midway between the Mensheviks and the liberals, the third was A S Martynov, who became a prominent leader of the Mensheviks and who in 1923 came over to the Russian Communist Party.

its ranks and formed an independent organisation known as the *Revolutionary Social-Democrat*.

The attitude of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* was a reformist attitude and in fact merely another form of Economism.

This centrist, intermediary, compromising attitude, in comparison with the more consistent attitude of the *Rabochaya Mysl*, consisted in the fact that the *Rabocheye Dyelo* did not in so many words reject the political struggle against the autocracy and did not declare that that struggle must take the exclusive form of a strike movement. Its centrist, intermediary, and compromising position was expressed in its "theory of stages."

According to the *Rabocheye Dyelo* the Russian working class movement had to grow "spontaneously" and pass through a series of stages in a definite order. It must not be forced into a higher stage before it had passed through all the lower ones. The lowest stage was the economic struggle. Until it had passed through that stage there could be no talk of a political struggle. The question of engaging in the political struggle would arise in good time, that is, when the stage of the economic struggle had already been fully exhausted. Moreover, the political struggle itself would consist of a series of stages, in the first of which a number of extremely elementary demands would be advocated.

Thus, the *Rabocheye Dyelo* did not reject the political struggle against the tsarist autocracy unconditionally. All it said was that the political struggle was untimely. But in practice this amounted to rejecting the political struggle.

While not in principle denying the necessity for the political struggle, the followers of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* wanted to postpone it to some indefinite date. In practice they were supporting the extreme Economists, in other words, were doing that which suited the interests of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, they conceived the political struggle not in the revolutionary Marxist sense, not as a struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, but in a liberal opportunist sense. It was in the interests of the bourgeoisie that the working class should be diverted from independent political action, and that it should be made a passive instrument of the bourgeoisie. "Thrones drenched with the blood of the people will one day collapse of themselves"—these sarcastic words of Martov excellently expressed the thoughts of the Economists (who were the forerunners of the Mensheviks), concerning the prospects

of the political struggle of the working class against the tsarist autocracy

In practice one could not distinguish hundred per cent Economism from fifty per cent Economism, *i e*, the *Rabochaya Mysl* and the *Credo*, on the one hand, from the Economism of the *Rabocheye Dyelo* on the other. Both were products of the influence of the petty bourgeoisie among the proletariat. It was typical of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists, who were themselves in essence Economists, that they screened and embroidered Economism. The theory of stages advanced by the *Rabocheye Dyelo* was a component part of an idea later developed by the Mensheviks regarding the relation between the spontaneous and conscious elements in the working class movement.

The revolutionary Social-Democrats of the 'nineties, and subsequently the paper *Iskra*, declared that the Social-Democrats must be the conscious leaders of the spontaneous movement of the working class, that they must act as the vanguard of the masses. That is the way the Communist Party today regards the matter. But the view of the *Rabocheye-Dyelo*-ists was entirely different. They advocated a *khvostist*\* theory, namely, that the Social-Democrats must follow the spontaneous and elemental movement of the working class; they must not lead the working class movement but follow in its wake and must base their tactics on the psychology of the more backward sections of the proletariat. Otherwise, the Economists declared, the Social-Democrats would become separated from the spontaneous movement of the masses, and be isolated. The economic movement was a real and concrete fact, and therefore the Social-Democrats must adapt their activities to that movement. The Social-Democrats must follow where the working class masses spontaneously lead and base the whole of their tactics on that spontaneous movement. As Plekhanov put it, that meant "contemplating the backside" of the working class movement. In accordance with these views the *Rabocheye Dyelo* developed an idea subsequently borrowed by the Mensheviks and called by them *tactics as a process*; in other words, manipulating and

\* *Khvostist*, *i.e.*, following in the wake or tail, from the Russian word *khvost*, a tail. The epithet was, of course, applied to the Economists by their opponents. For lack of an adequate English equivalent we retain the Russian term—*Trans.*

adapting tactics in accordance with the given state of the movement, in a word, surrendering oneself to the play of the elements and drifting without compass or rudder. In contrast to the idea of the *tactics as a process* Lenin in his *What Is To Be Done* advocated the idea *tactics as a plan*, a plan worked out by the Social-Democrats as the conscious vanguard of the working class movement, whereby they set themselves definite aims designed to lead the masses forward, instead of following in their wake. The theory of the *tactics as a process* was one of the central ideas developed by the journal *Rabocheye Dyelo*.

Such were the main variations of Economism and the literary products in which they expressed themselves. The petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, in advocating Economism and legal Marxism, were meekly taking their cue from the big bourgeoisie, who towards the end of the 'nineties, as a result of the favourable economic situation, had adopted a highly opportunist attitude toward the tsarist regime. But on the very boundary of the old and the new centuries, a sudden and disastrous change occurred in the development of capitalism in Russia, creating an economic and political situation radically differing from the economic and political situation prevailing in the 'nineties. And while the economic and political situation of the 'nineties was definitely favourable to the ideas of Economism, the change that now took place was a severe blow to the latter and facilitated the struggle waged against it by the revolutionary Marxists.

### *Conditions Favouring Economism*

What were the conditions that favoured the development of Economism? We have already mentioned one, namely the social make-up of the majority of the leaders of the Social-Democratic movement of the time. Those leaders were as a rule connected with the bourgeois democratic intelligentsia. But that, of course, was not all.

The question naturally arises: why did not the aroused masses of the workers who had been drawn into the strike movement resist Economism? Why did Economist ideas infest nearly all the Social-Democratic organisations of the time? What was the cause of the sudden popularity of these ideas?



We have already stated that the movement had been violently deprived of its oldest theoretical and practical workers, who were nearly all revolutionary Marxists. That was a fact of tremendous importance, as Lenin pointed out. The autocracy exerted every effort to prevent the growth of the revolutionary working class movement. But there were other reasons favouring the development of Economist ideas. One was the fact that the first steps of the still feeble and immature working class movement were taken in a definite economic situation, during the period of industrial boom which began in 1891 (although that year was a year of famine) and lasted throughout the whole of the 'nineties.

One effect of the industrial boom was a tremendous increase in the number of industrial workers. In spite of the rapidly progressing impoverishment of the peasant masses, in spite of the fact that the ruined peasants flocked to the cities in vast numbers, employment was available for all, for industry was experiencing a tremendous demand for labour power. Unemployment was hardly known in the 'nineties. The number of workers engaged in industry increased rapidly, from 1,424,000 in 1890 to 2,098,000 in 1897.\* The demand for labour power fell very little short of the supply, and that circumstance created a situation more favourable to the defence of the interests of the workers against the employers than is usually the case under capitalism

It is no mere chance that the strike movement was not very strong at the end of the 'seventies, when industry was suffering from depression, whereas with the commencement of the industrial boom the strike movement rapidly spread throughout the whole of Russia.\*\* The employers were frequently forced

\* Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the increase in the number of workers took place mainly in large enterprises. In Russia in 1902 the number of workers engaged in factories employing more than 1,000 persons amounted to 38.5 per cent of the industrial proletariat, while in Germany in 1895 it amounted to only 10 per cent. The predominance of large industrial enterprises is a characteristic feature of Russian capitalism.

\*\* It does not, of course, follow from this that strikes can be organised only during periods of industrial boom, as is now being asserted by the Social-Democrats and the renegades from communism. However, the general economic situation must always be taken into account when considering a strike.

to grant concessions to the workers, for with a growing demand for merchandise they found that it paid to make certain wretched wage increases rather than allow their mills to stand idle. The economic strikes achieved definite increases of wages. In the 'eighties and the 'nineties, the tsarist government was obliged to introduce a series of laws with the purpose of mitigating the ruthless exploitation of labour. Improvements gained by certain groups of workers, temporary and unstable though they were, served to stimulate other economic struggles.

Moreover, owing to their lack of class consciousness and their inexperience, the more backward sections of the working class felt no particular need for revolutionary political changes, especially since certain improvements could be obtained by the economic struggle. This frame of mind, which was prevalent among a section of the working class that had been drawn into the struggle, created an extremely favourable soil for the Economists, whose argument was that the political struggle might be postponed indefinitely, and that the economic struggle was enough. The more highly skilled workers, because of their comparatively more secure material conditions, and partly under the influence of the general economic situation, were particularly receptive to the teachings of the Economists \*

But it was characteristic of the Economists, as of the European Bernsteinist opportunists at the close of the 'nineties, that they generalised the temporary economic boom into a permanent law of capitalist development, whereas it very soon arrived at its natural and inevitable conclusion—a crisis, as the revolutionary Marxists had foretold.

The crisis spread throughout the whole of Europe. In Russia it was particularly virulent.

The crisis in Russia was aggravated by the steady deterioration in the situation of the peasants. The peasants suffered from a twofold burden—the exploitation of the capitalists and the landlords and the weight of taxation imposed by the tsarist government. The impoverishment of the peasants hindered the

\* It should be stated that the higher skilled categories of workers in Russia were never as numerous as in Western Europe. That explains why the influence of socialist opportunism over the Russian proletariat was comparatively feeble.

development of the home market. A radical solution of the agrarian problem, in the sense of the complete abolition of the survivals of feudalism, had become a fundamental condition for the further development of industry and economic life generally.

Statistics show that the strike movement steadily expanded up to 1899 and then began to decline. In 1900, the beginning of the industrial crisis, the number of strikes dropped to a minimum. Production was being curtailed and masses of workers thrown on to the streets. The working class came to realise the inadequacy of the economic struggle alone. This favoured the work of the revolutionary Social-Democrats, of the *Iskra*-ists and Bolsheviks, who called upon the masses to wage war on the autocracy.\*

\* It should be mentioned that even prior to the appearance of the *Iskra*, Economism was not the only current in the Russian Social-Democratic movement of the late 'nineties. The St Petersburg organisation had fallen completely under the sway of the Economists, but in 1898 a group of student technologists, dissatisfied with the opportunist activities of the Economists and their rejection of the political struggle, split away from the organisation, formed contacts with a group of revolutionary workers in Byelostok, and together with them organised a group known as the "Workers' Banner," named after the paper they issued.

The Workers' Banner group fully recognised the necessity for a political struggle against the autocratic government. But it was somewhat shaky in Marxian theory and did not consistently adhere to the class proletarian viewpoint.

That explains why a section of the Workers' Banner group, the Kiev group in particular, subsequently went over to the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. The majority of the members however realised their errors and united with the followers of the paper, *Iskra*. In 1902 the Workers' Banner ceased to exist as an independent group.

Another group existed in St Petersburg in 1899 known as the Socialist group, which also advocated the political struggle, but which displayed an extreme tendency towards the use of revolutionary phraseology. In the agitational work of both the groups mentioned general democratic views tended to outweigh strictly proletarian class views. This was still more true in the case of a group organised in 1900, known as the Workers' Party for the Political Emancipation of Russia, which subsequently as a body fused with the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

All these political groups, if they may be so called, were extremely weak. Their contacts with the workers were even less than those of the Economists. Their shakiness in questions of theory and their lack of a consistent class outlook made them an easy prey for "Left," in fact, petty-bourgeois phraseology. Here too we have what is essentially a case of bourgeois-democratic influence exerting itself on the proletariat. The revolutionary tendencies of these groups, principally made up of intellectuals, were a result of the revolutionising process which began to affect large sections of the Russian bourgeois-democratic intelligentsia, and of which we shall speak later.

This change was prophetically foretold by Lenin in his *Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, written in 1897:

"Apparently, we are now passing through the period in the capitalist cycle when industry is 'flourishing,' when business is brisk, when the factories are working to full capacity. . . . But one need not be a prophet to be able to foretell the inevitable crash (more or less sudden) that must succeed this period of 'industrial prosperity.' This crash will cause the ruin of masses of small masters, will throw masses of workers into the ranks of the unemployed, and will thus confront all the masses of the workers in an acute form with the questions of socialism and democracy which have already confronted every class conscious and thinking worker. Russian Social-Democrats must see to it that when the crash comes the Russian proletariat will be more class conscious, more united . . . and capable of taking the lead of Russian democracy in the resolute struggle against the police absolutism which fetters the Russian workers and the whole of the Russian people."<sup>\*</sup>

### *Change in Spirit of the Working Class and the Democratic Intellectuals*

And, indeed, the crisis of 1900 brought about the radical change in the attitude of the working class so prophetically foretold by Lenin. The change was not without its causes. While the economic strike movement was developing political conditions had undergone a considerable change. In every respect the 'nineties may be said to have marked an important phase in the history of Russia. Economically she made tremendous strides during those ten years. It would indeed be strange if economic progress of so marked a character did not find its reflection in the political position of the various classes and groups of society.

We have already mentioned the wide spread of Marxian ideas among the intellectuals. What did that mean? We repeat, in no sense did it mean that the whole body of petty-bourgeois intellectuals had adopted the point of view of the working class. The majority of the intellectuals, while on the surface professing Marxian ideas, and in some cases even joining the ranks of the Social-Democratic organisations, actually remained true to their petty-bourgeois outlook. They were driven to the working class by necessity, by the need, not even consciously realised by all

<sup>\*</sup> Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats," *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow

of them, of using the working class movement in the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Those interests had long been crying for reform. The need for political reform was felt by the intellectuals and the liberal bourgeoisie as early as the 'sixties, and it was only natural that by the 'nineties the need should have become still more acute. But owing to the rapidity of economic development, conditions in the 'nineties did not tend to speed the growth of revolutionary feeling among the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, who occupied a position midway between the working class and the industrial bourgeoisie. The latter, for their part, displayed no particular hostility to the tsarist government in the 'nineties, a tendency encouraged by the currency and tariff policy of Witte, the Minister of Finance.

But with the onset of the economic crisis the situation underwent a profound change. The crisis affected the attitude not only of the working class but also of large sections of the petty bourgeoisie.

It was at this period, the borderline of two centuries, that the population began to feel particularly acutely the conflict existing between the interests of the economic development of the country, and the tsarist autocracy, which was squeezing that development in a vice, and the policy of which was dictated mainly by the interests of the landed nobility, whose views harked back to the days of serfdom. The industrial crisis was accompanied by the closing down of a number of large enterprises and resulted in an acute deterioration of the financial situation of the country.

The surplus of impoverished peasants could no longer find a natural outlet in expanding industry, and the ruin and decline of millions of peasant households were felt more acutely than ever.

This circumstance profoundly influenced the state of mind of the liberal bourgeoisie. Its influence on the masses of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia was even more profound. The revolutionary spirit of this intelligentsia and the opposition spirit of the liberal bourgeoisie rose with sharp intensity at the beginning of the twentieth century. The effect was most marked in the

case of the most sensitive and advanced section of the intelligentsia, namely, the students, who were influenced by the growing revolutionary movement of the working class.

In February 1899, following a collision between students and police, a general students' strike broke out in which about five thousand took part. This was the first instance of Russian students resorting to this form of protest borrowed from the workers. We have here a clear example of the hegemony exercised by the working class in the revolutionary movement even at that time.

The revolutionary process among the working class masses and the adoption of the political struggle by the working class movement exerted their influence on the students.

On May 1, 1900, a political strike of Kharkov workers took place. The year 1901 witnessed a number of demonstrations\* under political slogans in which students participated side by side with the workers. On the banners of the demonstrators were inscribed such slogans as "Down with the Autocracy," "Long Live Political Freedom," etc

In these demonstrations the working class masses proved themselves more advanced than the Social-Democratic organisations, which were still almost everywhere under the influence of the Economists. The latter remained true to their *khvostist* principles and refrained from assuming charge of the political movement initiated by the working class masses. They behaved as neutral observers. Nevertheless, within the organisations a vigorous opposition to the Economists had been started by the followers of a new political tendency known as the *Iskra*-ist movement.

May 1, 1902 was marked by a big strike in the Vyborg district of St Petersburg accompanied by collisions with the police, known to history as the Defence of Obukhov.<sup>3,4</sup>

The demonstrations were led by the workers and were organised by the Social-Democratic groups. When demonstrators were arrested, their trials furnished the opportunity for the deli-

\* Demonstrations were held in Kharkov, Moscow and St Petersburg.

\*\* In 1902 a number of mixed demonstrations of workers and students took place, and subsequently several May First demonstrations consisting entirely of workers took place in Sormovo and Saratov

very of violent attacks upon the government by the accused. Fiery agitational speeches were delivered in the courts, sharply protesting against the autocratic government and the capitalist system. These speeches were reproduced on illegal presses and distributed throughout the country in thousands of copies.

In the same year, at the beginning of November, we observe a new factor in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement—workers' political strikes.

### *Political Strikes of 1902 and 1903*

The strike which broke out in Rostov-on-Don in November 1902 differed from the strike in St. Petersburg in 1896 and from all the other strikes of the 'nineties in that it began as an economic strike and ended as a political strike. The strikers daily organised vast meetings on the outskirts of Rostov. The workers were joined by the lower townsfolk and for several days free and open political meetings were held. Frankly revolutionary speeches were made by representatives of the Don Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party calling for a struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy. The speeches were received by the workers with the greatest enthusiasm. The government completely lost its head and for several days could not decide what measures to adopt.

The events in Rostov marked an important stage in the development of the Russian revolutionary movement. In the following year, in the famous July days of 1903, we find that mass strikes beginning as economic strikes and ending as political strikes are no longer confined to one city. They had spread over the whole of the Ukraine and Trans-Caucasia. Political strikes broke out in Baku, Tiflis, Odessa, Nikolayev, Kiev, Elizavetgrad, Ekaterinoslav and Kerch. In all, about 250,000 workers participated in these strikes. The strikes were accompanied by revolutionary demonstrations held in the centre of the cities and led to collisions with the police. The workers took an extremely active part in the revolutionary demonstrations organised in connection with political strikes.

*Zubatovism*

The political manifestations of the working class began in 1902 as demonstrations and then assumed the form of mass revolutionary strikes, anticipating in their character the political strikes of 1905. Even prior to this, attempts were made by the government to use police provocation in order to prevent the economic movement of the working class assuming the form of a revolutionary political movement.

These attempts were made on a fairly wide scale over a period of years and came to be known as *Zubatovism*, or *police socialism*. Realising that in the effort to improve their material conditions the workers were being driven to revolution against the autocracy, the government decided to create its own "working class" organisations. These organisations were to be entirely under the influence of government agents and their attitude towards the tsarist government was to be more or less that of the social-fascist organisations in Europe towards the bourgeoisie at the present day.

The tsarist government was striving to create a "working class" organisation which would to all appearances be fighting in defence of the interests of labour, but which in reality would divert the workers from the revolutionary political struggle.\* An organisation of this kind was started in Moscow by a captain of the gendarmerie named *Zubatov*. *Zubatov* recruited a number of workers as his agents. But in order to get large numbers of workers to join his organisation he had to have some bait to offer them. As a result, *Zubatov* was driven to extremely risky methods.

He began to stir up the passions of the workers in a number of factories. Strikes resulted, in which *Zubatov's* organisation was obliged to participate, and even to lead. This did not please the capitalists. Here was a government-formed organisation urging the workers to strike and assuming the leadership of the

\* It is worth noting that the attempts made by the government to divert the workers from the political struggle and to confine their attention to their economic interests coincided with similar endeavours of the opportunist Social-Democrats. It did not occur to the tsarist government to form *Zubatovist* organisations in the 'nineties, it began to form them only when the working class movement, in spite of the Economists, began to resort to political forms of struggle.



strikes. The capitalists began to bring vigorous pressure to bear on the government with the result that Zubatov was removed and his organisation dissolved. The workers realised that "police socialism" had nothing to offer them, and that the gendarmes, however hard they tried, could not create an organisation for the defence of the interests of the workers. In Moscow Zubatovism collapsed.

It was equally unfortunate in Minsk and other cities in Western Russia. Here Zubatov's agents at first met with a certain amount of success and even succeeded in forming an organisation known as the Jewish Independent Labour Party. Zubatovism lasted longest of all in Odessa, owing to the activities of a secret police agent named Shayevich. But here too the organisation came to a wretched end. It collapsed during the strike wave of July 1903, which, as we have already mentioned, spread to all the large centres of the Ukraine, including Odessa. The government, however, would not learn from this experience, as subsequent history proved. In 1904 another of these "police socialist" organisations was formed in St. Petersburg, known as the Society of Russian Factory and Mill Workers. This organisation was in no small part responsible for the events of January 9, 1905, which finally disposed of the monarchist illusions of the proletariat of St. Petersburg, together with those of the proletariat of the whole country.

The manifestations of the revolutionary movement above described, beginning with the demonstrations of the year 1901 and 1902 and ending with the great political strikes involving tens of thousands of workers, were the reflection of the rapid growth of the movement, its adoption of the political struggle, the increased activity of the revolutionary democratic organisations, the eviction of the Economists from these organisations and the assumption of their control by the *Iskra*-ists.

### *Primitive Methods Become Antiquated*

At the beginning of 1900, when the political movement and revolutionary strikes had not yet spread throughout the whole country, Lenin and his colleagues in the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, Martov and Potresov, the future leaders of the Mensheviks, returned from exile in Siberia and at once began to agitate for the restor-

abon of the political centre created by the First Congress of the Party in March 1898. As we mentioned above, this centre was arrested immediately after the First Congress. It could not be restored, partly on account of the prevailing police conditions, but chiefly because control of the movement fell into the hands of the Economists, who were incapable of creating a revolutionary Marxian party. A political centre implies that there is a political movement for that centre to direct. When there is no political struggle, and when the movement assumes the form of purely economic conflicts in isolated mills and factories, the guidance of the movement can be adequately exercised by organisations embracing a city or even by organisations confined to isolated mills and factories. The primitive methods of organisation prevailing at the time were therefore due to the fact that the movement bore an exclusively economic character. Primitiveness (or amateurishness) as a term describing the organisational methods of the Economists was as widely known at that time as the epithet *khvostism* applied to the same movement. While *khvostism* characterised the tactical methods of the Economists, primitiveness characterised their principles of organisation. The term primitiveness, or amateurishness, was used to describe that elementary and extremely chaotic form of organisational structure in which the various organisational units confined themselves to the limits of single cities and maintained no contacts with organisations in other cities, while their activities were not directed or coordinated by a political centre of any kind.

"Our movement," Lenin later wrote in the *Iskra*, "both ideologically and in its practical organisational structure, suffers more than anything else from its diffusedness, from the fact that the vast majority of the Social-Democrats are almost entirely immersed in their purely local work, which fact narrows their outlook and the scope of their activities and blunts their conspirative ability and their preparedness for action. It is in this diffusedness that instability and vacillation have their deepest roots" <sup>4</sup>

In his *What Is To Be Done* Lenin retrospectively described the period of the domination of Economism in the Russian Social-Democratic movement as follows:

"This was the period of confusion, disintegration and vacillation. In the period of adolescence the youth's voice breaks. And so, in this

\* Lenin, "Where to Begin," *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow.

period, the voice of Russian Social-Democracy began to break, began to strike a false note—on the one hand, in the productions of Messrs Struve and Prokopovich, Bulgakov and Berdyaev, on the other hand in the productions of V. I. [Ivanshin—N.P.] and R. M. [a contributor to the *Rabochaya Mysl*—N.P.], B. Krichevsky and Martynov. But it was only the leaders who wandered from the path, the movement itself continued to grow and advanced with enormous strides. The proletarian struggle spread to new strata of the workers over the whole of Russia and at the same time indirectly stimulated the revival of the democratic spirit among the students and among other strata of the population. But the consciousness of the leaders was not equal to the breadth and power of the spontaneous rising, among Social-Democrats, a different streak predominated—a streak of Party workers who had been trained almost exclusively on “legal” Marxian literature, and the more the spontaneity of the masses called for consciousness, the more the inadequacy of this literature was felt. The leaders not only lagged behind in regard to theory (‘freedom of criticism’) and practice (‘primitiveness’) but even tried to justify their backwardness by all sorts of high-flown arguments. Social-Democracy was degraded to the level of trade unionism in legal literature by the Brentano-ists and in illegal literature by the *Khvostists*. The programme of the *Credo* began to be put into operation.”\*

Just as in industry primitiveness is synonymous with small enterprises,\*\* so in politics primitiveness implied a system of small, dispersed and organisationally unconnected organisations.

But as soon as the new spirit began to make itself felt, a revolutionary wave spread over the whole country, and with the return from exile of the old political workers who had been cut off from the movement for many years, the question of creating a political centre again claimed attention. At first Lenin and his colleagues attempted to revive the old Central Committee elected at the First Congress and to issue a paper called the *Rabochaya Gazeta* as the central organ of the Party. That attempt failed. Lenin and his comrades then decided to organise the political centre at first abroad by establishing there the central political press-organ. The latter through its agents was to serve to strengthen organisational contacts and thereby lay the foundations for a political organisation embracing the whole country.

\* Lenin, Conclusion to “What is To Be Done,” *Selected Works*, Vol II

\*\* The Russian term here translated as primitiveness to describe the organisational structure advocated by the Economists is *kustarnuchestvo*, the literal meaning of which is home or hand industry (as distinguished from factory industry), hence its derived meaning, primitive, or amateurish—*Trans*

*Iskra*

In May 1900, in the city of Pskov an illegal conference was held at which plans were discussed for starting a paper outside of Russia. There were present at this conference, in addition to Lenin, Martov and Potresov, certain representatives of legal "Marxism" who at that period still maintained contacts with the Party, among them the author of the Manifesto of the First Congress, Struve, and the author of *The Russian Factory, Past and Present*, Tugan-Baranovsky. It is true that Struve and Tugan-Baranovsky had in practice already definitely broken away from Marxism, but they expressed their sympathy with the suggestion of founding a political paper presumably in the expectation that it might serve not only the interests of the workers, but also the interests of the liberal bourgeoisie.

The conference decided to establish the central paper abroad and to invite the participation of the Emancipation of Labour group, since that body had also begun to combat Economism. In 1900 Plekhanov published his *Vademecum*, a guide to the editors of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, consisting of a compilation of genuine documents and letters written by the leaders of the Economist movement, certain of which were not designed for publication. These documents clearly exposed the opportunist nature of Economism. Plekhanov supplied an explanatory foreword. Almost at the same time Plekhanov published a pamphlet directed against the Economists entitled *Once More On Socialism and the Political Struggle*.

Following the Pskov Conference Lenin and Potresov proceeded abroad. Plekhanov at first vigorously opposed the publication of a central political paper, but agreement was finally reached with the Emancipation of Labour group. The first number appeared in December 1900 in Stuttgart.\* The paper was known as *Iskra* (*The Spark*) and carried the motto: *From a Spark Comes Flame*.

Lenin, who was the real head of the editorial staff of the paper, clearly realised that the latter was but the foundation stone of a vast edifice, only the beginnings of the tremendous work that must be undertaken in order to create a political

\* From Stuttgart the *Iskra* was transferred to Munich, from thence to London, and finally to Geneva.

party capable of guiding the Russian working class and of bringing the Russian proletarian movement into the political struggle

Legal "Marxism" and Economism represented the first serious attempts on the part of the Russian bourgeoisie to gain control of the working class movement after that movement had in the 'nineties begun to adopt mass methods of class struggle. The Economists had become petty-bourgeois agents, with the help of whom the bourgeoisie endeavoured to take the movement into its own hands and to use it in behalf of its own class interests.

This attempt was at first facilitated by the weakness and immaturity of the movement. At one time the German reformist leader and agent of the German bourgeoisie, Bernstein, could proudly declare that the majority of the Social-Democrats in Russia had adopted his views. Bernstein proclaimed as the promised land of international reformism the very country which was subsequently to become the promised land of revolutionary Communism. But Bernstein was fated not to rejoice very long. The formation of a working class movement in Russia and the crystallisation of its political character took place on the eve of the bourgeois democratic revolution, which stirred vast masses of the people into action. Under the influence of the atmosphere of impending revolution the working class of Russia was led to reject the worn path of reformism pursued by the Social-Democratic movement in Western Europe and favour the path recommended to the international proletariat by Marx and Engels, and to Russia by the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, headed by Lenin, namely, the creation of an independent political party, as opposed to the bourgeois parties, a party capable of establishing the hegemony of the working class.

That was the path followed by the *Iskra*, which in two and a half years succeeded in forming a party that smashed Economism completely.

Nevertheless, the destruction of Economism was in itself not enough to emancipate the working class movement of Russia from the influence of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie found a new ally in Menshevism, which proved to be a much more

powerful and tenacious political tendency than its predecessor, Economism.

But, as we shall see, the work of *Iskra* not only resulted in a complete victory over Economism and in the organisation of a party; it also trained that party to continue the struggle against the opportunist successors of Economism.

During the *Iskra* period Bolshevism crystallised politically and organisationally. As Lenin expressed it, the opportunist rearguard was replaced by the true vanguard of the most revolutionary of classes.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ISKRA PERIOD AND THE BEGINNING OF BOLSHEVISM

*The aims of "Iskra"—In defence of Marxian theory—The tactical policy of "Iskra"—Demarcation before union—Conscious effort versus spontaneity—Democratic centralism—Primitive organisation replaced by a party—A national political paper—Differences among the "Iskra" editors on programme questions—"Iskra's" part in the preparations for the Second Congress—Composition of the Second Congress—Programme adopted—Resolutions on tactics—Discussion on the Party statutes—The Bolsheviks fight against the opportunists and conciliators after the Congress—Significance of the Second Congress and the split—Bolshevism in the International Arena*

#### *The Aims of "Iskra"*

*Iskra* was born on the threshold of a new century and at the beginning of a new era of revolution which followed on the end of the period of passivity into which the European working class movement had sunk after the Paris Commune of 1871 was crushed. It also marked the beginning in Russia of the powerful wave of revolution that reached its apex in 1905. The rise of this revolutionary wave was accompanied by the rise and development of *Iskra*.

The Editorial Board of the old *Iskra*\* consisted, on the one hand, of representatives of the Emancipation of Labour Group—Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich—and, on the other, of the group of political workers who had guided the activities of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in the middle of the 'nineties—Lenin, Martov and Potresov (alias Starover). But the moving spirit of the paper was Lenin. He it was who inspired the political policy of the old *Iskra*.

What were the aims of the paper? These were clearly laid down in the leading article of the first number, written by Lenin.

\* *Iskra* up to the autumn of 1903, when it passed into the hands of the Mensheviks, is known as the old *Iskra*

"Social-Democracy is a combination of the labour movement with socialism. Its task is not passively to serve the labour movement at each of its separate stages [as the Economists advocated—*N.P.*], but to represent the interests of the movement as a whole....

"To assist the political development and the political organisation of the working class is our principal and fundamental task." \*

Political development and political organisation are indissolubly associated. Until that time there were the circles which were concerned with the development of their members; frequently not so much with their political development as with their cultural development. Then came the Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, which were individual organisations confined to individual cities, and primarily engaged in agitation on behalf of economic improvements. Finally, with the growth and spread of political feeling and with the development of the movement, there arose the task not only of furthering the class development, but also of creating a political organisation of the working class on a national scale, that means, creating a revolutionary proletarian party to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What forms did this aim assume in practice? *Iskra* conceived the problem very broadly, and proceeded to carry it out on a wide scale. *Iskra* became a genuine organ of political leadership. It set itself the aim of creating a powerful fighting organisation with a harmonious and consistent programme. Profound problems of politics and organisation were raised, discussed and decided in its pages in a spirit of uncompromising opposition to international opportunism and to the Russian variety of opportunism. The editors of *Iskra* also published a theoretical journal called *Zarya* (*The Dawn*), in which authoritative articles appeared dealing with every problem of Marxism. *Zarya* also carried on an uncompromising fight against the revisionist ideas that were also very widespread in Russia since the 'nineties. *Iskra* fought these ideas not only in Russia, but also in the international movement. The old *Iskra*, and Lenin in particular, attached the greatest importance to revolutionary theory.

As Lenin wrote in *What Is To Be Done*.

"Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.... The importance of theory for Russian Social-Democrats is still greater for three reasons, which are often forgotten.

\* Lenin, "The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement," *Selected Works*, Vol II



"The first is that our Party is only in the process of formation, its features are only just becoming outlined, and it has not yet completely settled its reckoning with other tendencies in revolutionary thought which threaten to divert the movement from the proper path.

"The second reason is that the Social-Democratic movement is essentially an international movement. This does not mean merely that we must combat national chauvinism. It means also that a movement that is starting in a young country can be successful only on the condition that it assimilates the experience of other countries.

"The third reason is that the national tasks of Russian Social-Democracy are such as have never confronted any other Socialist party in the world. *The role of vanguard can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by an advanced theory*" \*

*Iskra* declared war on revisionism and opportunism along the whole front, beginning with questions of theory and ending with questions of organisation and Party structure

### *In Defence of Marxian Theory*

The theoretical war against revisionism was waged in defence of the fundamental principles of the philosophical, historical and economic teachings of Marx and of Marx's analysis of capitalist production relations. That analysis discloses the inevitable intensification of the conflict of class interests within the capitalist system, as expressed in the accumulation of wealth at one pole and increased impoverishment at the other, the proletarianisation of the intermediary sections of the population of the town and the countryside, and the ripening of the social and political conditions necessary for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Such is the course of capitalist development as described by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*. Plekhanov devoted a number of articles to refuting Struve, Bernstein and other critics of Marx, who disputed these fundamental postulates. In one such article Plekhanov declared that Bernstein's views were utterly alien to Marxism and called upon the German Social-Democrats to expel him from the Party.\* Plekhanov's articles

\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II.

\*\* Prior to this Plekhanov had attacked Bernstein in the German press in two articles, one entitled *Bernstein and Materialism*, and the other *What Have We to Thank Him For?* It is noteworthy that Bernstein's articles, in which he endeavoured to demolish the theoretical and political views of

against Struve and Bernstein and other revisionist theoreticians were subsequently included in his book *A Criticism of Our Critics*. But Plekhanov himself at that time was already compromising with the revisionists on a number of points, particularly on the questions of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin, on the other hand, maintained a consistently Marxian attitude on every issue in the fight against the revisionists, both theoretical and practical.

In an article entitled "The Agrarian Question and The 'Critics of Marx'"\*, printed in *Zarya*, Lenin gave a detailed criticism of the position of the revisionists on the agrarian question. That question was at that time one of the trump cards of the revisionists. Bernstein and those who shared his views, such as David and Hertz, argued that first of all the laws of economic development outlined in the *Communist Manifesto* and in *Capital* did not apply to the province of agrarian relations; that in this sphere small production would triumph over large production and that in agriculture the future belonged to the small individualist peasant farms.

The revisionists argued that the small peasant enjoyed the advantage over the capitalist landowner. The peasant proprietor, they alleged, devoted more zeal and energy to the cultivation of the soil than the hired worker employed by the big landlord. In defiance of Marx and Engels, who regarded large enterprises, both industrial and agricultural, as technically and economically higher forms of production than small enterprises, the revisionists proposed that the Party should advocate small peasant proprietorship. This was tantamount to a direct rejection of socialism. Lenin attacked the views of Hertz, David and Bernstein in *Zarya*.

The theoretical standpoint of *Iskra* and *Zarya* was that the class contradictions within capitalist society were becoming steadily more acute and that capitalism was faced with the

Marx and Engels, were printed in the scientific journal of the German Social-Democratic Party, *Die Neue Zeit*, edited by Kautsky, and appeared without editorial comment of any kind. Only after vigorous protest by Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg did Kautsky discontinue the publication of Bernstein's articles, which were thereupon issued in book form. It should be noted, however, that in his philosophical articles against Bernstein, Plekhanov committed several Kantian errors, compromising with the Kantian doctrine of the unknowability of the surrounding world (the thing in itself), which served Kant as a foundation for religion.

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. IV

menace of a revolutionary crisis, in the form of a desperate struggle for power between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat both in individual countries and internationally. It was the duty of the international revolutionary Social-Democratic movement to organise and extend that struggle and help to bring it to a successful conclusion, namely, to the establishment of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

In the pages of the old *Iskra*, Lenin devoted a great deal of attention to defending and explaining the programme of the Party on the national question (*i.e.*, the right of nations to self-determination), as against the Polish Social-Democrats, who tended to minimise the importance of this question and presented it in a distorted and non-Marxian light, and against the bourgeois-nationalist spirit of the Bund

### *The Tactical Policy of "Iskra"*

The tactical policy of the old *Iskra* was to urge in number after number that the working class must pursue an independent political policy. *Iskra* waged ruthless war on those who, like the Economists and the authors of the *Credo*, would have the proletariat be a passive instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

*Iskra* constantly emphasised the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat, *i.e.*, that the working class must lead the whole revolutionary movement of the country. We met with elements of this idea when we discussed the Emancipation of Labour group, but it was Lenin who in his pamphlets, *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight Against the Social-Democrats* and *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* gave a complete and detailed exposition of the idea. The principle of the hegemony of the proletariat formed the foundation of *Iskra's* political activity.

The working class is the hegemon and the main driving force of the revolution. But it was not enough to express this idea in general and abstract terms. It had to be embodied in practice. It had to be shown what concrete forms would be assumed in the course of the revolutionary struggle by the relations between the working class and the other revolutionary or oppositionist elements. This applied particularly to the peasant

revolutionary movement, which in 1902 took the form of violent "disorders" in the Kharkov and Poltava gubernias.

The Economists completely ignored the peasantry; they left them to the undivided influence of the bourgeoisie. The *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists, whose views were but a variation of those of the Economists, gave a vulgarised interpretation to the idea of the class independence of the proletariat. They considered that any active attempt on the part of the proletariat to influence other classes and groups (including the peasantry) politically was a betrayal of the independence of the working class. The *Iskra*, however, regarded this question in an entirely different light. It based itself on the analysis of the economic situation of Russia given by Lenin in his *What the "Friends of the People" Are, etc.*, *The Economic Content of Narodism* and in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. It regarded the peasantry as one of the most powerful revolutionary forces in the country. It realised that the class struggle in the countryside was gaining in intensity. At the same time it did not forget that the survivals of serfdom were conflicting with the interests of the peasantry as a whole. Lenin devoted considerable attention to an economic analysis of this latter question in his *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, in which he showed that those survivals were a tremendous hindrance to the development of agriculture. Lenin considered that one of the main tasks of the impending revolution would be to fight for the total eradication of the survivals of serfdom. True, *Iskra* at that period did not yet advocate the confiscation of the estates of the landlords; nevertheless, Lenin was already insisting that the demand for the nationalisation of the land should be included in the programme, but was frustrated by the resistance of Plekhanov and other members of the editorial committee, who later were to become Mensheviks.

*Iskra* declared ruthless warfare on the new petty-bourgeois movement of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who regarded themselves as the heirs of the revolutionary Narodniki of the 'seventies and 'eighties. Lenin justified this war by the fact that

"in the great split of international Social-Democracy into an opportunist ('Bernsteinian') and a revolutionary wing, this tendency has taken up a very definite and inadmissibly half-way position between two stools;

basing itself on nothing but the bourgeois and opportunist criticisms of Marxism, it has pronounced the latter to have been 'shaken'." \*

Moreover, the Socialist-Revolutionaries helplessly kowtowed to liberal Narodism and displayed a complete lack of principle on fundamental questions of the international and Russian movements. They rejected the idea of the class struggle and of the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolutionary movement. They pursued a path that led to the ideological subjugation of the Russian proletariat to the bourgeoisie. By advocating individual terrorism as the most effective method of combating the autocracy, they tended to disorganise the mass struggle of the working class.

*Iskra* sensitively responded to the revival of the Zemstvo-liberal and intellectual democratic movement. Its duty, it considered, was to assist the revolutionary and oppositionist movement in every section of the population, so as to derive the utmost advantage from them in the interests of the working class, while at the same time, of course, not allowing its own independence to be limited in the slightest degree.

Its public political exposure of the tsarist autocracy gained *Iskra* a wide circle of readers. Among them were even the liberals, whom it spurred on to fight the autocracy, at the same time mercilessly exposing and branding all attempts at agreement or compromise with the tsarist government. Of course, *Iskra* was not blind to the ambiguous and opportunist nature of bourgeois liberalism, which at that time was beginning to become a political force.

"The party of the proletariat," Lenin wrote, "must learn to catch every liberal just at the moment when he is prepared to move forward an inch, and compel him to move forward a yard. If he is obstinate and won't—we shall go forward without him, and over his body." \*\*

The punctiliously revolutionary line adopted by Lenin towards bourgeois liberalism aroused the objections of other members of the editorial staff of *Iskra*, particularly of Plekhanov. Referring to Lenin's article *The Persecutors of the Zemstvo and*

\* Lenin, "Why the Social-Democrats Must Declare Determined and Relentless War on the Socialist-Revolutionaries," *Selected Works*, Vol II

\*\* Lenin, "Political Agitation and 'The Class Point of View,'" *Collected Works*, Vol IV.

the *Hannibals of Liberalism* directed against Struve, Plekhanov wrote:

"This is not at all the time to scold the liberals. It is pedantic. We must appeal from the bad liberal to the good liberal. We must treat the liberals as a potential ally, and it must be confessed that your tone is not that of an ally. Moderate it. This is not the time to rub the liberals the wrong way. It is a serious mistake"

Thus, Plekhanov placed his faith in the "good" liberal, in the bourgeois liberal path of reform in Russia, and in a compromise being arrived at between the liberals and the tsarist government. Lenin's views on the fundamental political questions concerning the tactics of the working class were clearly and precisely expounded in his articles in the *Iskra*. We find a general, systematic, developed and extremely vivid description of Lenin's theoretical, political and especially organisational views in his book *What Is To Be Done*. This book appeared in 1902 and was an important factor in the creation of the Bolshevik Party.

The book presents a detailed exposition of Lenin's fundamental political views and outlines his great plan for the structure of a new type of revolutionary working class party.

Lenin's basic theses are in direct contradiction to the principles of organisation not only of the Economists, but also of the Social-Democrats of Western Europe and of the whole Second International.

In its early days (the summer and autumn of 1901) *Iskra* attempted to reach an understanding with the Economists, in particular, with the editors of the paper they published abroad, the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, and to persuade them to renounce their opportunist views. But these attempts came to nothing. Lenin was the most uncompromising of the editors of the *Iskra* in his attitude towards the Economists. Definite political conditions were presented to the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists: they were required to renounce revisionism and to condemn it categorically (and at the same time to accept unconditionally the political policy of the *Iskra*). The *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists would not accept these terms and negotiations were broken off.

The attitude of toleration and compromise towards revisionism was shared by the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists with the leaders of West European Social-Democracy, Kautsky, for instance, who carried on a verbal warfare against the revisionists, but at the

same time would allow the publication of revisionist articles in their journals, even without editorial comment, thus surrendering the fundamental Marxist position to the revisionists. These leaders did not even dare to hint at the expulsion of Bernstein from the Party. Bernstein was allowed complete freedom of criticism, although his criticism was an attack on, and a violation of, all the fundamental principles of Marxism. Rosa Luxemburg alone in the German Social-Democratic Party, where she was a sort of white raven, dared raise her voice in conjunction with Plekhanov and demand the expulsion of Bernstein from the Party. But even she confined herself to verbal demands and took no effective steps to have them carried out.

### *Demarcation Before Union*

Lenin's attitude was an entirely different one and was shared by the old *Iskra*, which Lenin headed. In November 1900, long before the appearance of *What Is To Be Done*, it was stated in the announcement of the forthcoming publication of the newspaper *Iskra* that "before uniting and in order to unite, we must first resolutely and deliberately draw lines of demarcation." Demarcation must first be achieved by a clear statement of one's political views. One could then see with whom one could unite, and with whom not.

In order to understand why Lenin in the *Iskra* period already demanded a break with opportunism internationally, one must have a clear idea of the situation then prevailing within the Second International. This is the way Comrade Stalin described that situation in his book *Leninism*:

"... between Marx and Engels on the one hand and Lenin on the other lay a whole period of domination by the opportunism of the Second International. To be more precise, I must add that it was not so much a question of the formal as of the actual domination of opportunism. Formally, the Second International was headed by 'orthodox' Marxists like Kautsky and others. Actually, however, its fundamental work followed the line of opportunism. Because of their petty-bourgeois adaptable nature, the opportunists adapted themselves to the bourgeoisie as for the 'orthodox' they adapted themselves to the opportunists in order to 'maintain unity' with the latter, to maintain 'peace within the Party'. As a result opportunism dominated, because the link between the policy of the bourgeoisie and the policy of the 'orthodox' was joined.

"It was a period of relatively peaceful capitalist development, a pre-war period, so to speak, when the disastrous contradictions of imperialism had not yet so obviously revealed themselves, when economic strikes and trade unions developed more or less 'normally,' when in the electoral struggles and parliamentary fractions 'dizzy' successes were achieved, when the legal forms of struggle were exalted to the skies, and when it was hoped to 'kill' capitalism by legal means. In other words, it was a period when the parties of the Second International were becoming gross and stodgy, and no longer wanted to think seriously about revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the revolutionary training of the masses." \*

The "orthodox" Marxists of the Second International of the Kautsky type were content to live in peace with the opportunists. They regarded revisionism as a perfectly legitimate tendency within the working class movement. Formally, they attacked revisionism, but they surrendered a number of important theoretical positions. This applies particularly to Marx's teaching on the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The "orthodoxers" worked hand in hand with the revisionists in the opportunist mutilation of the Marxian doctrine. This applies as much to Plekhanov as to Kautsky.

Marx declared that the proletariat could not simply take over the state machine of the bourgeoisie. It would have to smash that machine in the course of violent revolution and on its ruins erect the state dictatorship of the proletariat. In the course of time this dictatorship would gradually wither away.

The opportunists, with the connivance of the "orthodox" Marxists, distorted this essential doctrine of Marx. They pretended that the proletariat could gain possession of the bourgeois state machine by peaceful methods, with the aid of parliamentarism, without the necessity of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat. They pretended that when Marx and Engels spoke of the gradual withering away of the state, they had the bourgeois state in mind.

Kautsky had already begun to misrepresent the doctrine expounded by Marx in *Capital* of the increasing impoverishment of the proletariat under capitalism. Kautsky attempted to show that while the share of the proletariat in the national income did indeed decrease relatively, absolutely the condition of the

\* Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism," *Leninism*, Vol. I.



workers was improving, and therefore there could be no question of increasing impoverishment.

In practice the "orthodox" Marxists of the Second International compromised with revisionism. Lenin, on the other hand, regarded the opportunists and revisionists as the direct agents of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement.

"In fact, it is no secret that two separate tendencies have been formed in international Social-Democracy. The fight between these tendencies now flares up in a bright flame, and now dies down and smoulders under the ashes of imposing 'resolutions for an armistice'."

In his *What Is To Be Done* Lenin gives a clear and incisive description of opportunism as an international phenomenon:

"...the English Fabians, the French Ministerialists, the German Bernsteinists [revisionists—*Ed*], and the Russian 'Critics'—all belong to the same family, all extol each other, learn from each other, and are rallying their forces against 'doctrinaire' Marxism. Perhaps, in this first real battle with socialist opportunism, international revolutionary Social-Democracy will become sufficiently strengthened to put an end to the political reaction that has long reigned in Europe."

This is how Lenin describes the renegade bourgeois character of opportunism internationally.

"Social-Democracy must change from a party of the social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms. Bernstein has surrounded this political demand by a whole battery of symmetrically arranged 'new' arguments and reasonings. The possibility of putting socialism on a scientific basis and of proving that it is necessary and inevitable from the point of view of the materialist conception of history was denied, as also were the facts of growing impoverishment and proletarianisation and the intensification of capitalist contradictions. The very conception of '*ultimate aim*' was declared to be unsound, and the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was absolutely rejected. It was denied that there is any difference in principle between liberalism and socialism. *The theory of the class struggle* was rejected on the grounds that it could not be applied to a strictly democratic society, governed according to the will of the majority, etc.

"Thus, the demand for a decided change from revolutionary Social-Democracy to bourgeois reformism was accompanied by a no less decided turn towards bourgeois criticism of all the fundamental ideas of (Marxism.)" \* \* \*

From which Lenin draws the conclusion:

\* Lenin, "What Is To Be Done," *Selected Works*, Vol. II.

\*\* *Ibid.*

\*\*\* *Ibid.*

"... 'freedom of criticism' means freedom for an opportunistic tendency in Social-Democracy, the freedom to convert Social-Democracy into a democratic reformist party, the freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into socialism" \*

And Lenin rises in arms against such freedom and such compromising with bourgeois opportunism.

" 'Freedom' as a grand word, but under the banner of Free Trade the most predatory wars were conducted, under the banner of 'free labour,' the toilers were robbed." \*\*

The history of bourgeois revolutions shows that the most ruthless oppression of the working class is carried on by the bourgeoisie in the name of freedom. Lenin therefore was not impressed by fine words on the subject of freedom of criticism.

"We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and are under their almost constant fire. We have combined voluntarily, precisely for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not to retreat into the adjacent marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now several in our crowd begin to cry out 'Let us go into this marsh!' And when we begin to shame them they retort: 'How conservative you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the right to invite you to take a better road?' Oh yes, gentlemen! You are free, not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render *you* every assistance to get there. Only, let go of our hands, don't clutch at us and don't besmirch the grand word 'freedom'; for we too are 'free' to go where we please, free not only to fight against the marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh" \*\*\*

Lenin stood for deliberate dissociation from international opportunism, organisationally as well as ideologically; for without organisational dissociation it is folly to speak of ideological dissociation. Even at that time, before the political and organisational formation of Bolshevism that took place at the Second Congress, Lenin clearly saw that a merely literary fight against revisionism would not lead very far. An organisational cleavage from the opportunists was necessary and the new organisation

\* *Ibid*

\*\* *Ibid*

\*\*\* *Ibid.*

must be based on complete ideological dissociation from opportunism. There must be no room in the organisation for people who are at variance with the views of the organisation on fundamental questions of principle, who depart from the proletarian class point of view and accept the bourgeois point of view.

The Party must not consist of a collection of heterogeneous groups and factions which do not share common principles. The Party must be a monolithic whole.

Lenin called for a monolithic party, having one common and definite point of view. It was to be a new kind of party: a unified, closely welded party, directed from a single authoritative centre, a party capable of assuming the leadership of the political struggle of the working class.

"Give us an organisation of revolutionaries," Lenin wrote, "and we shall overturn the whole of Russia" \*

"No movement can be durable without a stable organisation of leaders to maintain continuity . . . the more widely the masses are spontaneously drawn into the struggle and form the basis of the movement, the more necessary is it to have such an organisation and the more stable must it be." \*\*

Certain European revolutionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (the Jacobins and the Blanquists) created centralised organisations which played a tremendous part in the political struggle of the times (e.g., the Jacobins' Club). Their example was followed by the Russian revolutionaries of the 'seventies (the Zemlevoltsi and the Narodovoltsi). The organisation Lenin called for in *Iskra* and in his book *What Is To Be Done* was to be strictly centralised after the Jacobin model. But in contrast to the Jacobins who were petty-bourgeois revolutionaries, Lenin's organisation was intended to be the vanguard of the working class, a class consolidated and organised by the conditions of capitalist development and the revolutionary role of which is without equal in the history of the world. That is why the powerful organisation created in accordance with Lenin's principles is unlike anything the world had seen. That organisation is now the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

\* *Ibid.*

\*\* *Ibid.*

*Conscious Effort Versus Spontaneity*

As we have stated in the previous chapter, the distinguishing feature of the Economists and the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists was their worship of spontaneity. Their opinion was that the Social-Democrats should follow in the wake of the spontaneous mass movement, to be, as it were, the recorders of that movement.

This theory of spontaneity, or *khvostism*, to use the Russian term, was subjected to a merciless and detailed criticism in *What Is To Be Done*:

"...the fundamental error committed by the 'new tendency' in Russian Social-Democracy [Lenin is referring to Economism—*N.P.*], lies in its subservience to spontaneity, and its failure to understand that the spontaneity of the masses demands a mass of consciousness from us Social-Democrats. The more spontaneous the awakening of the masses, the more widespread the movement becomes, so much the more rapidly grows the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political and organisational work of Social-Democracy

"The spontaneous awakening of the masses in Russia proceeded (and continues) with such rapidity that the young untrained Social-Democrats proved unfitted for the gigantic tasks that confronted them.... The awakening of the masses proceeded and spread uninterruptedly and continuously, it not only continued in the places it commenced in, but it spread to new localities and to new strata of the population (influenced by the labour movement, the ferment among the students, the intellectuals generally, and even among the peasantry revived) Revolutionaries, however, *lagged behind* this rise of the masses in both their 'theories' and in their practical activity; they failed to establish an uninterrupted organisation having continuity with the past, and capable of *leading* the whole movement."\*

For Lenin the central factor was leadership. He wrote:

"There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the *spontaneous* development of the labour movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology, leads to its developing *according to the programme* of the *Credo*, for the spontaneous labour movement is pure and simple trade unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei*, and trade-unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie."\*\*

When Social-Democrats renounce the leadership of the working class movement in principle and rely on spontaneity, the result is the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie.

\* *Ibid*

\*\* *Ibid*

Hence, the theory of spontaneity of the Economists, and subsequently of the Mensheviks, was the theory of agents of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement: it made for the subordination of that movement to the political leadership of the bourgeoisie.

One of the greatest mistakes committed by Rosa Luxemburg was her defence of the Menshevik theory of spontaneity. She wrote an article for the Menshevik *Iskra* in which she attacked Lenin's principles of organisation.

The Economists and *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists associated their rejection of the leadership of the working class movement by the Social-Democrats with their rejection of the idea of the tactics as a plan, which they regarded as contrary to the spirit of Marxism

" 'Tactics as a plan contradicts the fundamental spirit of Marxism' But this is a libel on Marxism, it is like the caricature of it that was presented to us by the Narodniki in their fight against us. It means putting restraint on the initiative and energy of class-conscious fighters, whereas Marxism, on the contrary, gives a gigantic impetus to the initiative and energy of Social-Democrats, opens up for them the widest perspectives and, if one may so express it, places at their disposal the mighty force of millions and millions of workers 'spontaneously' rising for the struggle " \*

Lenin's criticism of the theory of spontaneity of the Economists and *Rabocheye-Dyelo*-ists was an important factor in the history of the Bolshevik Party. In the process of combating this theory, the doctrine of the Party as the leader and vanguard of the working class was worked out. The groundwork of this doctrine we already find in *What Is To Be Done*.

Stalin in his *Leninism* emphasises the important part that was played by Lenin's criticism of the theory of spontaneity:

"The 'theory' of spontaneity is the theory of opportunism. It is the theory of deference to the spontaneity of the labour movement, the theory that actually denies to the vanguard of the working class, to the Party of the working class, its leading role.

"The theory of deference to spontaneity is decidedly opposed to the revolutionary character of the labour movement, it is opposed to the movement following the line of struggle against the foundations of capitalism and is in favour of the movement following exclusively the line of 'possible' demands which are 'acceptable' to and can be carried out under capitalism. It is wholly in favour of the 'line of least re-

\* *Ibid*.

sistance' The theory of spontaneity represents the ideology of trade unionism.

"The theory of deference to spontaneity is decidedly opposed to giving the spontaneous movement a conscious, methodical character. It is opposed to the Party marching ahead of the working class, elevating the masses to the level of class consciousness and leading the movement. It argues that the class conscious elements of the movement should not prevent the movement from taking its own course and that the Party be subservient to the spontaneous movement and follow in its trail. The theory of spontaneity is the theory of belittling the role of the class conscious element in the movement, the ideology of 'dragging at the tail,' of '*khvostism*'—the logical basis of *all opportunism*.

"In practice this theory, which appeared in Russia even before the first revolution, led its adherents, the so-called 'Economists,' to deny the need for an independent workers' party in Russia, to oppose the revolutionary struggle of the working class for the overthrow of tsarism, to preach pure and simple trade unionism in the movement and, in general, to surrender the labour movement to the hegemony of the liberal bourgeoisie.

"The fight of the old *Iskra* and the brilliant criticism of the theory of tailism offered by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done* not only routed so-called 'Economism,' but also created the theoretical foundation for a truly revolutionary movement of the Russian working class.

"Without this fight it would have been quite useless to think of creating, in Russia, an independent workers' party and of its playing a leading part in the revolution." \*

### *Democratic Centralism*

How was the political organisation of the working class to be constructed under the political conditions imposed by the tsarist government? On this question Lenin vigorously fought the Economists and on this question he carried on a stubborn and bitter fight against the Mensheviks over the course of many years. According to the Economists, the organisation of the working class must be based on the broadest democratic principles with the maximum application of the elective principle. Lenin considered that, in view of the conditions prevailing under tsarism, this was sheer utopianism. Nay, it was dangerous child's play, for it would simply mark people for the police to lay their hands on. Only class enemies of the workers, and their agents within the working class movement, could propose the creation of such an organisation under tsarism. Broad democ-

\* Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism."

racy and the elective principle were out of the question under the prevailing autocratic system.

The Economists, as later the Mensheviks, declared themselves in favour of broad democracy and the elective principle, at all costs; a view which Lenin emphatically rejected. From the very outset he regarded broad democracy as a system of organisation, as a means and not as an aim.

A party built on broad democratic principles is, indeed, an excellent instrument for the maintenance of contact between the Party leaders and the Party rank and file, between the leading Party bodies and the Party organisations in the factories. But where conditions are such that democracy cannot be practised, where its effect is not to strengthen the organisation, but to destroy it, it would be folly to sacrifice the interests of the organisation for the sake of democracy. Lenin proposed that the organisation of the Party should be built from above: that the city committees should be appointed by the Central Committee, and that every committee should have the right to co-opt new members. No other alternative was possible at a time when the secret police sometimes arrested whole committees at one stroke. To practise a broad system of election, when police persecution was so vicious and contacts with the working class still inadequate, would simply mean marking people for the gendarmes to arrest.

In opposition to the principle of broad democracy advocated by the Economists, which could only be to the advantage of the bourgeoisie, Lenin proposed the principle of democratic centralism. A centralised Party leadership, which owing to prevailing conditions could not be elected by the rank and file in accordance with the principles of broad and formal democracy, would have to gain its authority by conducting a correct political policy, by maintaining close contact with the masses and by setting an example of unselfish devotion to the cause of the working class. The important thing was to select the right people for the posts of leaders. The centralised Party leadership would have to influence and bring vast masses into action. As Lenin stated in *A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks*:

“The whole art of ‘conspirative organisation’ consists in using everything and everybody, in finding some job for everybody to do, at the same time retaining the leadership of the whole movement, and

doing so, of course, not by virtue of invested authority, but by virtue of merited authority, by the greater energy, greater experience, greater universality and greater talent displayed.

"The Committee must endeavour to achieve the maximum division of labour, remembering that different branches of revolutionary work demand different abilities."

Lenin attributed great importance to systematic propaganda work.

"...I should like to say a word against the usual *overcrowding* of this profession with people of indifferent ability, whereby the level of propaganda is *degraded*. . . There are *very few* propagandists, really capable and really irreproachable on questions of principle. Such people must be allowed to specialise in their work, must be kept fully occupied and must be carefully cherished."

Lenin also emphasised the necessity of contacts and organisational work in the factories. He wrote:

"... Why, the main strength of the movement lies in the state of organisation of the workers in the *large* factories; for in the large factories (and mills) we have that section of the working class that is predominant not only in numbers, but still more in influence, degree of development and fighting capacity. Every factory must be our fortress . . . and here, too, the group of revolutionary workers must unconditionally be the centre and leader, the 'master.' We must break completely with the tradition of a purely labour or trade union type of Social-Democratic organisation . . ."

Centralised leadership must be associated with the maximum decentralisation of inside information and responsibility towards the Party.

"We must centralise the leadership of the movement. We must also (and indeed for that purpose, for decentralisation is impossible without information) effect the greatest possible *decentralisation of responsibility towards the Party* of every individual member, of every section of work and of every circle belonging, or adhering to the Party. Such decentralisation is an essential condition for, and an *essential correction to*, revolutionary centralism."<sup>\*</sup>

### *Primitive Organisation Replaced by a Party*

Primitiveness was the basic organisation principle of the Economists.

As we have seen, all attempts to create a national political

\* Lenin, "A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks," *Collected Works*, Vol V



organisation failed, and were bound to fail as long as the ideas of the Economists predominated. They were suffocated by the amateurishness and primitiveness that everywhere prevailed. Contacts between organisations in different cities, and even between organisations in one city, did not exist, each guided the economic struggles of the workers of the given city or factory according to its own will and fancy. As Lenin wrote:

"By our primitive methods we have lowered the prestige of the revolutionary in Russia."

And yet the problem of the Party organisation, of the leadership of the growing revolutionary movement, was demanding urgent solution.

And when *Iskra* began to agitate for wide political action, and in particular for a revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy, and when the working class became the leading revolutionary class in the country, the work of organising the Party began to proceed rapidly and successfully.

Lenin in *What Is To Be Done*, in which the basic principles of Party organisation are laid down, naturally inveighed with the greatest vigour against the primitiveness and amateurishness of the Economists, against the lack of contact and co-ordination between their various groups and circles, against the tendency of the latter towards independence, and the isolation of each organisation from the Party as a whole, the result of which was to reduce the Party to complete impotence. Lenin demanded that an end should be put to these amateurish and primitive methods and a real political party created.

"Circles of amateurs, of course, are not capable of fulfilling political tasks, and never will be, until they realise the primitiveness of their methods and abandon it. If besides this, these amateurs are enamoured of their primitive methods, and insist on writing the word 'practical' in italics, and imagine that practicality demands that their tasks be degraded to the level of understanding of the most backward

\* "The 'economic struggle against the employers and the government' does not in the least require—and therefore such a struggle can never give rise to—an all-Russian centralised organisation that will combine in a general attack all the numerous manifestations of political opposition, protest and indignation, an organisation that will consist of professional revolutionaries and be led by the real political leaders of the whole people." Lenin, *"What Is To Be Done," Selected Works*, Vol. II.

strata of the masses, then they are hopeless of course, and certainly *cannot fulfil general political tasks*. But circles of heroes like Alexeyev and Myshkin, Khalturin and Zhelyabov are able to fulfil political tasks in the genuine and most practical sense of the term, because their passionate preaching meets with response among the spontaneously awakened masses, because their seething energy rouses a corresponding and sustained energy among the revolutionary class. The time has come when Russian revolutionaries, led by a genuine revolutionary theory, relying upon the genuinely revolutionary and spontaneously awakening class, can at last—at last!—rise to their full height and exert their giant strength to the utmost.”

### *A National Political Paper*

Such are the political and organisational principles of Party structure which are expounded by Lenin systematically and in detail in his *What Is To Be Done*—principles that to this day play a tremendous part in the organisational structure of the Bolshevik Party. But how to begin the construction of a centralised political party? Lenin declared that the starting point must be an all-Russian (national) political paper, which would serve as the central and guiding organ of the Party. By organising a widespread circulation of the paper, local contacts would be formed and an agency of readers, subscribers and distributors created, actively sympathising with and actively supporting the paper. On such a basis a real organisation would be founded. The paper would serve the same purpose in the construction of the Party as the scaffolding plays in the construction of a house. The paper must serve as a collective organiser.

“Around what is in itself a very innocent and very small, but a regular and *common* cause, in the full sense of the word, an army of tried warriors would systematically gather and receive their training. On the ladders and scaffolding of this general organisational structure there would soon ascend Social-Democratic Zhelyabovs from among our revolutionaries, and Russian Bebels from among our workers, who would take their place at the head of the mobilised army and rouse the whole people to settle accounts with the shame and the curse of Russia.”

That is how Lenin pictured the part that must be played by a national political paper in the construction of the Party, and

\* Lenin, “What Is To Be Done,” *Selected Works*, Vol. II.

\*\* *Ibid*

that in fact was the part *Iskra* played. And time after time the Party press, following the instructions of the great leader, played its part in the building of the great Party, a party which in the end succeeded in establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat in a vast country and assuming the leadership of the struggle of the toilers and oppressed of the whole world.

*Differences Among the 'Iskra' Editors on Programme Questions*

The aims and objects of the proletarian struggle were precisely formulated in the draft Party programme drawn up by the editorial board of *Iskra* which subsequently was approved by the Second Party Congress. We are referring to the Party programme that remained in force down to the Eighth Party Congress, when it was replaced by the programme now in force. True, one part of the programme, the agrarian programme, in the form in which it was adopted in 1903, existed only three years and at the Fourth (Stockholm) Party Congress held in 1906 was replaced by the so-called programme of municipalisation, which was forced on the Party by the Mensheviks who enjoyed a majority at that congress.

But the basic theoretical section and the remaining sections of the minimum programme (except for the agrarian section) continued to remain in force right down to the second revolution.

In 1924 there was published in Volumes II and III of the *Lenin Miscellany* the dispute which was waged on the editorial board of *Iskra* between Plekhanov and Lenin during the drafting of the programme. Lenin presented his own draft as against Plekhanov's draft. Finally, after exchanges of communications and discussions among the *Iskra* editors, Plekhanov wrote a second draft programme in which were embodied the main amendments on matters of principle advanced by Lenin. Plekhanov's draft was adopted by the Second Party Congress with Lenin's amendments.

What was the essence of Lenin's amendments? Lenin demanded that both in its practical and theoretical sections the programme should not be confined to an abstract analysis of capitalism in general, but that it should give a precise description of Russian capitalism and the specific features that dis-

tinguished it from capitalism in the countries of Western Europe. Lenin vigorously objected to Plekhanov's attempt to expunge from the programme the point dealing with the dictatorship of the proletariat and succeeded in having that point retained. Furthermore, Lenin insisted that greater emphasis should be given than was the case in Plekhanov's draft to the hopelessness of the position of the small independent producers in capitalist society and to the proletarian class character of Social-Democracy. On this point revolutionary Social-Democracy came into violent collision with revisionism, which endeavoured to efface the class difference between the proletariat and the petty-bourgeoisie and to transform what was essentially a proletarian party into a petty-bourgeois party.

Apart from theoretical errors, Lenin considered that the main defect of Plekhanov's draft was its pedagogical tone, that it was "a programme for students," and not a programme for an actually fighting party. Lenin fought for a militant proletarian programme.

Lenin drew up an agrarian programme for the Party. The return to the peasants of the *otrezki* (i.e., the best sections of the land that were taken from the peasants during the application of the reform of 1861 and without which the peasants were unable to conduct their husbandry) by the formation of peasants' committees would be an undoubted blow to feudalism. Lenin further pointed out that as the peasant insurrection developed, the programme of the *otrezki* would be replaced by a programme of confiscating and nationalising all the estates of the landlords. On the editorial board of *Iskra* Lenin's proposal regarding the possibility of demanding nationalisation of the land in the bourgeois revolution provoked the violent protest of Plekhanov, Axelrod and other members of the board. These future Mensheviks considered it impossible to demand the nationalisation of the land in the bourgeois revolution, and thereby they denied the necessity of the leadership by the proletariat of the revolutionary struggle of the peasantry against the feudal landlord system. These differences on the agrarian part of the programme among the *Iskra* editors embodied the two future lines of Social-Democracy on the peasant question: the Bolshevik and the Menshevik.

Lenin's main proposals on the general theoretical part of the

programme were adopted and the programme submitted to the Second Congress was the finest of all the programmes of the international Social-Democratic movement. This programme gave a precise formulation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

*"Iskra's" Part in the Preparations for the Second Congress*

*Iskra* proved a great success. Its popularity was based on its excellent organisation, on its brilliant comments on all current political questions affecting the international and the Russian working class movements, on the excellent political information it gave on all manifestations of the revolutionary movement in Russia, and on the fact that a great demand existed for a paper capable of serving as a guide and leader. The result was that *Iskra* groups were soon formed in practically every large city in Russia. Gradually the Party organisations also began to rally around *Iskra*, and committee after committee declared its adherence to the paper. Through its agencies, *Iskra* worked not only for the enlargement of its own circulation, but also for the development of the Party organisations. L. Martov witnesses that the "transport" of the paper across the Russian frontiers was very well organised.

"Foreign consignments of merchandise were dispatched through the Prussian, Austrian and Rumanian frontiers, by sea via Marseilles, Alexandria and the Bulgarian ports, through Tavrîz in Persia, through Archangel, and even through the Kola Peninsula, in spite of the vigilance of the police watchdogs."

The next step was to be the consolidation of this work by the summoning of a congress, which would adopt a Party programme, lay down the basic lines of its tactics and adopt the principles of its organisational structure.

\* The most prominent agents of *Iskra* were Radchenko, Lengnik, Krzhizhanovsky, Lepeshinsky, Zemlyachka, Stasova, Knipovich, Okulova, Nogin, Krassikov and Teodorovich, while organisational work of great importance was performed by N. K. Krupskaya, who was the secretary of the editorial committee.

\*\* During 1902 and beginning of 1903 the following committees declared their adherence to *Iskra*: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Orekhovo-Zuevo, Tver, Saratov, Tula, Irkutsk, Ekaterinoslav, Kiev, Odessa, the Don, the Southern Worker group, the Siberian League, the Northern Labour League (embracing the Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Shuya, Kostroma and Yaroslavl committees) and the Miners' League, embracing the organisations of the Donets Basin.

Thanks to the systematic work carried on by *Iskra*, by the time of the Second Congress Economism had practically lost its influence in the local organisations. Nay, more, the trend towards participation in the political struggle, not only among the workers, but also among the intelligentsia, was so powerful and Economism had so obviously become bankrupt, that independently of *Iskra*, both in the provinces and in the emigrant centres abroad, Social-Democratic groups were formed which broke with the traditions of Economism and adopted the policy of the political struggle.

The most powerful of these was the group formed in 1899, known as the Southern Worker, which published a paper in Ekaterinoslav under the same name. The influence of the paper extended to other cities of the Ukraine, particularly Kharkov. The Southern Worker group enjoyed fairly wide organisational connections and was able at the beginning of 1902 to call a South Russian conference in Elizavetgrad.\*

The Southern Worker group on the whole shared the political views of the *Iskra*, but differed from it on questions of organisation, it being still under the influence of the tradition of Economist primitiveness and pseudo-democracy. The Southern Worker organisations attempted to pursue an independent line and declined to join the *Iskra* organisations. Later, however, those who favoured closer contact with *Iskra* gained the upper hand. But opportunist and anti-*Iskra* tendencies had struck deep root in the Southern Worker group, and when its existence as an independent organisation was terminated by the Second Congress the majority of its members joined the Mensheviks.

Somewhat later than the Southern Worker group the Northern Labour League was formed, the inaugural congress of which was held in Voronezh in January 1902.\*\*

The purpose of this group was to unite the forces of the Social-Democratic organisations scattered over the central provinces (Yaroslavl, Kostroma and Vladimir). In political views it

\* Among its leaders were Lalayantz, who later became a prominent Bolshevik, Naumov (Ginsburg), A. Ermansky and V. Rozanov, who subsequently joined the Mensheviks.

\*\* The founders of the League were Varentsova, Noskov (who at the Second Congress was elected a member of the Central Committee), A. I. Lyubimov, L. Karpov and others.

differed very little from the *Iskra*, with which it very soon fused.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there existed still another independent group known as *Borba* (*Struggle*), the leaders of which were D. B. Ryazanov and Steklov. This group sharply differed in views from the *Iskra*, particularly on organisational questions. It disapproved of what it alleged to be *Iskra's* conspirative and ultra-centralist tendencies.

The influence of the *Borba* group was insignificant, so much so, indeed, that it was not even granted representation at the Second Congress.

Mention deserves to be made of the revolutionary socialist group *Svoboda* (*Freedom*), headed by the talented writer Nadzhdin. Like the Workers' Banner group and the Socialist group referred to in the previous chapter, *Svoboda* tended towards pure politics. In its contempt for theory and its belief in excitatory terrorism it was akin to the Socialist-Revolutionaries. By the time of the Second Congress this group had collapsed.

True, the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists attempted to forestall *Iskra* in the summoning of a congress. In March 1902 the League of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad attempted to call a Party congress in Byelostok. But in place of a congress a conference was summoned in which certain of the provincial organisations and the Bund participated, and at which an organisational committee was appointed and entrusted with organising a congress. But the committee was arrested, and the initiative passed into the hands of *Iskra*, which managed to form a new organisational committee at a conference held in Pskov in November 1902.

The committee set about its work with great energy. Its agents travelled over the whole of Russia, everywhere strengthening contacts with the *Iskra* editorial committee and between the organisations themselves. The work was crowned by the summoning of the *Second Party Congress*.

The Second Congress, which met in London in July and August 1903, adopted the Party programme and passed a number of resolutions on questions of tactics. At this Congress division of opinion on a number of political and organisational questions became acute, and the *Iskra* organisation split into a majority and a minority, afterwards to become known as the *Bolsheviks*.

and the *Mensheviks* (from the Russian words for majority and minority respectively—*Trans* )

*The history of the Bolshevik Party as such really begins from the Second Party Congress.*

### *Composition of the Second Congress*

The Congress was attended by forty-four delegates representing twenty-six organisations. Among the forty-four delegates were four workers; the remainder were intellectuals.

It was mainly local committees of the Party that were represented at the Congress, but, in addition, there were delegates from the *Iskra* editorial committee, from the League of Revolutionary Social-Democrats, formed not long prior to the Congress as an organisation of the followers of *Iskra* residing abroad, from the League of Russian Social-Democrats, an organisation of the Economists, and from the Bund.

Since the First Congress the Bund had formally adhered to the Party, but differed from *Iskra* on political and organisational questions. It was opposed to the vigorous, militant, revolutionary and Marxist viewpoint of *Iskra*. The Bund displayed an obviously conciliatory attitude towards revisionism and Economism, in fact adopted their position on theoretical and political questions and on a number of questions of organisation, *e.g.*, democracy and the elective principle. In addition, the Bund advocated the organisation of workers according to nationality. The Bund demanded that the Party should recognise its sole right to represent the Jewish proletariat. It considered that the Jewish workers should belong to special organisations within the Party united in the Bund, and the Bund itself be connected with the Party by a sort of federal tie.

As against the Bund's federal plan of organisation, the *Iskra*, and Lenin in particular, demanded a centralised party uniting the workers according to their locality and independently of their nationality.

### *Programme Adopted*

The Second Congress performed a great work. It laid firm foundations for a political organisation of the Russian proletariat—the Bolshevik Party, a party which the hirelings of the tsar



could no longer destroy. The Congress adopted the Party programme presented by *Iskra*, as drawn up by Plekhanov, but with substantial amendments introduced by Lenin. At the Congress the draft programme was supported by all the members of the *Iskra* editorial committee. Among all the existing programmes of the European socialist parties (the Erfurt Programme of the German Social-Democratic Party adopted in 1891, the Heinfeld Programme of the Austrian Social-Democrats adopted in 1899, and the programme of the French socialists, drawn up by Lafargue and Guesde in the early 'eighties), the *Iskra* programme stood out as the sole consistent Marxian programme. The *Iskra* programme gave a precise exposition of the fundamental theses of Marx and Engels on the subject of the social revolution, the transfer of power to the working class and the expropriation of the expropriators. It was the only programme containing a point on the dictatorship of the proletariat, a point absent in the programmes of the German, the Austrian and all other parties of the Second International. This point is formulated in the *Iskra* programme clearly and precisely in the following terms:

"An essential condition for the social revolution is the dictatorship of the proletariat, *i.e.*, the conquest by the proletariat of such political power as will permit it to suppress all attempts at resistance on the part of the exploiters."

This point of the programme, as well as others, aroused the opposition of the Economists. One of their representatives at the Congress, Akimov-Makhnovetz, proposed twenty-two amendments attempting to give an opportunist twist to a number of the points of the programme, all of which were, however, rejected.

Several interesting debates developed during the discussion of the programme. Particularly important is the declaration made by Plekhanov that the demands for bourgeois democracy contained in the programme bore a conditional character. All the Social-Democratic programmes at that time demanded bourgeois democracy. This was also true of the programme proposed by *Iskra*, and adopted by the Congress. It consisted of two parts—a maximum and a minimum programme—and contained demands for a constituent assembly, for universal, direct and equal suffrage, for freedom of speech, the press and assembly, the

right to strike and to belong to trade unions, inviolability of person, etc—in a word, all the fundamental demands of bourgeois democracy To these demands Plekhanov supplied an extremely edifying commentary It was possible, he declared, that a time might come when we would demand the limitation of universal suffrage, of the constitution and of political freedom, and when we might consider it expedient to deprive our class enemies, the bourgeoisie, of such rights\*.

This statement was made by Plekhanov at the Second Congress of the Party, fourteen years before the Party put the slogan of a Soviet government into practice, dispersed the Constituent Assembly and deprived its class enemies of political rights—against the protest of Plekhanov! But at the Second Congress Plekhanov was in complete solidarity with Lenin on this question. Naturally, his utterances were not to the taste of all the delegates; they were a rude shock to the prejudices that many of them still cherished.

The democratic prejudices so roughly treated by Plekhanov at the Second Congress found many zealous defenders among the Economists, the Bundists and the future Mensheviks. But in

\* This is what Plekhanov said at the Congress "The success of the revolution is the supreme law, and if the success of the revolution should demand the temporary limitation of any one or other democratic principle it would be criminal to refrain from such limitation. In my personal opinion, even the principle of universal suffrage must be considered from the point of view of the fundamental principle of democracy to which I have referred Hypothetically, one may envisage a situation in which Social-Democrats would be opposed to universal suffrage There was a time when the Italian bourgeois republics deprived persons belonging to the nobility of political rights The revolutionary proletariat might limit the political rights of the upper classes, just as the upper classes limited the rights of the proletariat"

Plekhanov further added "If in an outburst of revolutionary fervour the people elected a very good parliament, it would be our duty to endeavour to make that parliament a *Long Parliament* On the other hand, if the selection were not a good one, we should strive to dissolve it not in two years, but, if possible, in two weeks" (From the Protocols of the Second Congress, p. 156)

It should be mentioned that the Congress vigorously rejected a proposal for the abolition of capital punishment introduced by a delegate closely connected with the Economists The Congress recognised the necessity for the exercise of terrorism on the part of a revolutionary government towards the supporters of the tsar, the landlords and the bourgeoisie

the main, the bulk of the delegates received Plekhanov's utterances favourably

In the further course of the discussion, the Congress was faced with the national question. One of the points embodied in the programme adopted by the Second Congress, and even prior to that by the First Congress, proclaimed the right of every nation to self-determination, subsequently formulated by the Party as the *right of self-determination*, including *secession*. The Polish Social-Democrats attacked this point in their press prior to the Congress. They were of the opinion that the right of nations to self-determination was a bourgeois demand and contrary to the principles of international proletarian solidarity. If this demand were carried into effect, they declared, it would disintegrate the strength of the working class.

This opportunist underestimation of the significance of the national question was characteristic of the Polish Social-Democratic Party, the leader of which at that time was Rosa Luxemburg. It failed to foresee the revolutionary role that would be played by the slogan of the right of self-determination of nations in the Russian and world revolutions. Another reason why the Polish Social-Democrats were opposed to the point on self-determination in the Party programme was that they feared it might be taken advantage of by the Polish nationalist socialists.

But as a matter of fact, the Polish Socialist Party made capital of the failure of the Polish Social-Democrats to realise the importance of the national question. In the Programme Commission of the Second Congress the Polish Social-Democrats categorically demanded the elimination from the Party programme of the point regarding the right of nations to self-determination. When this demand was rejected they withdrew from the Congress. It was not until the Fourth Congress held in 1906 that the Polish Social-Democrats joined the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

Finally, considerable opposition was aroused among the Economists by the agrarian programme drawn up by Lenin.

\* The Polish Social-Democratic Party was formed in 1893 and after fusing with the Social-Democrats of Lithuania, was known as the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania. Among its leaders were Rosa Luxemburg, Y. Marchlewski, A. Warski, Tyszko (Yogiches) and Dzerzhinsky. At the Second Congress the Polish Social-Democratic Party was represented by Hanecki and Warski.

This programme, with the object of abolishing the survivals of the serf system, demanded the return to the peasants of the land *otrezki* of which they had been deprived in 1861. The programme also insisted that the peasants should be recompensed at the cost of the landlords for the redemption price they had to pay for their land after the so-called reform of 1861. The revolutionary character of this demand, subsequently replaced by the demand for the confiscation of all lands held by the landlords, terrified the Economists <sup>4</sup>

### *Resolutions on Tactics*

After the adoption of the programme the Congress proceeded to endorse a number of resolutions on tactics. These dealt with Zubatovism and the attitude to be adopted towards the Socialist-Revolutionaries <sup>5</sup> and towards the liberals. On the subject of the

<sup>4</sup> Lenin wrote an article in *Zarya* (No. 4) justifying his agrarian programme. This article was later published in popular form in a pamphlet entitled *To The Village Poor* and was the first document addressed by the Russian Party to the poor peasants.

<sup>5</sup> In 1903 the Socialist-Revolutionaries (S.R.'s) were not a party in the strict sense of the term. They consisted of a fairly amorphous combination of separate groups, each of which stood in favour of the political struggle. Among these groups were the Workers' Party for the Political Emancipation of Russia, the Kiev Workers' Banner group, the League of Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Agrarian Socialist League, which had its headquarters abroad, and of which many of the old Narodovoltsi were members, and several other groups. In 1902 the militant organisation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries committed its first big terrorist act in the assassination by Balmashov of the Minister for Home Affairs, Sipyagin. The Socialist-Revolutionary Party regarded itself as the successor of the traditions of the revolutionary Narodniki and Narodovoltsi and of the teachings of Lavrov and Mikhailovsky. It rejected the fundamental theoretical propositions of Marxism, in particular the doctrine of classes, and predicated the identity of interests of the workers, the peasants and what was known as the toiling intellectuals. They adopted with particular fervour the revisionist criticism of Marxism on the agrarian question. They attached great importance to individual terrorist acts, although formally they did not favour them to the exclusion of mass forms of revolutionary struggle ("not instead of, but together with"—as they expressed it). Being essentially a bourgeois-democratic party, the Socialist-Revolutionaries made pretensions to bring one hundred per cent revolutionary socialists, and even attempted to criticise *Iskra*, as well as the Social-Democrats of Western Europe, from a "Left" point of view, borrowing for that purpose a number of arguments from the anarchists. The Socialist-Revolutionary Party was definitely formed in 1905 at a congress held at the end of the year, but already at this congress there split off from the barely formed party the Maximalists on the Left and the Popular Socialists on the Right.

Socialist-Revolutionaries the Congress adopted a very trenchant resolution, to which the section of the delegates who at this very Congress laid the foundations of Menshevism also adhered. The Congress expressed the opinion that the activities of the Socialist-Revolutionaries were objectionable and harmful, not only from the point of view of the consolidation of the working class into an independent class party (which the S.R.'s rejected), but also from the point of view of the general democratic struggle against the absolute monarchy. The Congress declared that, by attempting to drag the working class into its petty-bourgeois swamp, and by speculating on the prejudices of the more ignorant and backward sections of the working class most closely associated with the peasants, the Socialist-Revolutionaries were doing harm, inasmuch as they bewildered the minds of the workers, undermined the leadership of the Social-Democratic Party, and thereby disorganised the struggle against the autocratic monarchy.

The paths of the S.R.'s and the Mensheviks later converged. At the present day both the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s, together with the Polish Socialist Party, the assassins of the revolutionary Polish workers, the Ukrainian Social-Democrats, who organised Jewish pogroms under Petlura (the assassin of whom even the French bourgeois courts exonerated), and together with the party of the bloodthirsty hound Noske and the murderers of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, form one single International, engaged in preparing intervention against, and wrecking activities within, the first proletarian state in the world.

Differences arose at the Congress over the attitude to be adopted towards the liberals. The resolution proposed by Plekhanov, which the Congress adopted, stated that advantage should be taken of the struggle conducted by the liberals against the government, while at the same time exposing the liberals themselves, and in particular *Osvobozhdeniye* (*Emancipation*), a paper founded not long prior to the Congress by P. Struve; also that the dilly-dallying, compromising attitude of the liberals should be opposed by the consistently revolutionary attitude of the Social-Democrats.

But simultaneously another resolution was adopted, introduced by Potresov, who later became a prominent Menshevik leader. This resolution declared that distinction must be made

between the various shades of liberalism and that support must be given to those liberals who associated themselves with the Social-Democrats in their struggle against the government and who favoured universal suffrage. In a word, this resolution proposed, not that the liberals should accept the point of view of the Social-Democrats, but that the Social-Democrats should accept the point of view of the liberals.

Here we already perceive the elements of future Menshevik tactics of supporting the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats). The Third Party Congress, held in 1905 and consisting exclusively of Bolsheviks, rescinded Potresov's resolution.

The Second Congress also adopted resolutions on the following subjects: local organisations, work among religious, sectarians, evidence while under arrest (recommending refusal to give evidence to the gendarmes); regional organisations; demonstrations, anti-Jewish pogroms, factory and workshop delegates, propaganda; attitude towards the student youth, Party literature. A mere enumeration of these resolutions illustrates what a wide and varied character the work of the Party had already assumed by the time of the Second Congress.

### *Discussion on the Party Statutes*

Having discussed the programme and the basic resolutions on tactics, the Second Congress proceeded to consider the statutes of the Party. Hitherto the *Iskra* group had displayed a more or less united front against the Economists, the Bundists and what was known as the "Marsh," *i.e.*, those who adopted a conciliatory and compromising attitude towards the Economists. But on the question of the statutes a profound difference of opinion at once manifested itself within the *Iskra* group and finally led to an open split. Two different formulations of the first point of the statutes were presented, one by Lenin and the other by Martov.

Who were to be regarded as members of the Party? Lenin declared that *those who accept the programme of the Party and support it both materially and by personal participation in one or other of the Party organisations shall be regarded as Party members*. In other words, whoever did not belong to one or

other organisation of the Party could not be regarded as a member of the Party, and that only members of Party organisations could be considered members of the Party. As Stalin has stated:

“By their definition of Party membership the Bolsheviks wished to put an organisational restraint upon the influx of non-proletarian elements into the Party. The danger of such an influx was very real at that time in view of the bourgeois-democratic character of the Russian revolution.”

As against Lenin's definition of Point 1 of the statutes, Martov, vigorously supported by Trotsky, presented a formula which proposed to consider everyone a member of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party who adopted its programme, supported it materially and rendered it regular personal assistance under the guidance of one of its organisations. In other words, membership of a Party organisation was not to be regarded as obligatory. Any bourgeois who donated a ruble or who permitted, say, two illegal Party workers to meet at his home, any such bourgeois or intellectual, who never showed his face at a factory, who had nothing whatever in common with the working class, but who at some time or other rendered some fortuitous aid to the Party, was to be allowed to acquire all the rights of membership. It was to this that Martov's formulation led, as was brought out clearly in the discussion; the intention was to embrace the intellectuals who surrounded the Party. At that time the Party had not yet attracted large masses of the workers into its ranks.

Members of the working class among the active leaders of the Party were still far too few. Of the forty odd delegates present at the Second Congress only four were workers. But even at that time the Party had very close contacts with the workers. It had its organisations in many factories, the importance of which Lenin emphasised in his *Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks*. It was now incumbent on the Party to recruit its ranks primarily from among the working class.

The Mensheviks, however, wanted to throw the ranks of the Party wide open to the intellectual elements, who were susceptible to every bourgeois influence. The result would inevitably be to fill the Party with middle class and semi-middle class elements. Lenin, of course, vigorously opposed any such proposal. In this

Plekhanov supported him, although not without a certain amount of hesitation.<sup>\*</sup> The Menshevik opposition to Lenin's formulation of Point 1 of the statutes, which demanded a precise definition of Party membership, was but a continuation of the struggle the Economists had waged against the *Iskra*-ists, since the Economists denied the necessity for a definite and centralised Party organisation as the vanguard of the working class and confused the ideas of Party and class. When the question was voted, the Mensheviks, supported by the Bundists and the Economists, carried their formulation of Point 1 of the statutes by a majority of two or three votes. Their triumph, however, was short-lived.

In the further discussion of the statutes the differences with the Bundists came to the fore. The Congress declined to adopt the federative principle of Party organisation. It also rejected the principle whereby the workers were to be organised according to nationality, instead of territorially. Thus, the attempt of the Bundists to have themselves recognised as the sole representatives of the Jewish proletariat collapsed. They thereupon withdrew from the Congress. Almost at the same time the delegates from the League of Russian Social-Democrats, offended by the resolution which called for the dissolution of their organisation, also quit the Congress. With the departure of these open and confessed opportunists, the balance of forces in the Congress turned in favour of the firm *Iskra*-ists and in the elections to the central institutions of the Party their representatives obtained the majority.

The central institutions were recognised as consisting of *the Central Party paper, the Central Committee*, and the body known as the *Party Council*.

This was a rather complex structure, one perhaps that will

<sup>\*</sup> "I fail to understand," Plekhanov declared, "why it is thought that Lenin's draft, if adopted, would close the doors of our Party to a large number of workers [as the Mensheviks asserted—NP]. Workers desiring to join the Party will not fear to attach themselves to an organisation. Discipline has no terrors for them. Many intellectuals, however, will be afraid to attach themselves to an organisation, for they are thoroughly imbued with bourgeois individualism. But that is all to the good. As a rule, such bourgeois individualists are bearers of every species of opportunism. We must dissociate ourselves from them. Lenin's draft may serve as a barrier to their entrance into the Party, and for that very reason it should be voted for by all enemies of opportunism" (From the Protocol of the Second Congress, pp. 245-6).



be little understood by younger Party members of the present day. Nowadays we have the Central Committee, the Secretariat of the Central Committee, the Organisational Bureau (Orgburo), the Political Bureau (Politburo), the Plenum of the Central Committee and the central Party organ. The Editorial Board of the central Party organ is appointed by, and is answerable to, the Central Committee. The Central Committee replaces the editors of the central Party organ whenever it sees fit. At that time the situation was entirely different.

*Iskra*, which was guided by Lenin, played a tremendously important part. It led the struggle against Economism and international opportunism, it guided the work of creating the Party. It was a question of making sure that *Iskra* would pursue a firm revolutionary policy in the future. That is why Lenin insisted that the editorial committee of the central Party organ, residing as it did abroad, out of the reach of the police, and consisting of tested people, should be endowed with the authority of a leading body side by side with, and indeed above, the Central Committee. In order to settle disputed questions that might arise between the Central Committee and the central organ, the Party Council was created. The Party Council consisted of five members (two representing the central organ, two the Central Committee, and the fifth elected directly by the Congress).

To the editorial committee of the central organ were elected Lenin, Plekhanov and Martov. Lenin and Plekhanov together formed a majority, for it was impossible then to foresee that Plekhanov would so quickly swing over to the Mensheviks. Only Bolsheviks were elected to the Central Committee, *viz*, Lengnik, Kzhizhanovsky and Noskov. The Central Committee was given the power to co-opt other members. When the Mensheviks perceived that the members of the old Editorial Board who supported Martov at the Congress, *viz.*, Zasulich, Axelrod and Potresov, failed to obtain election to the editorial committee of the central organ, they declined to be represented on any of the central bodies.

Such was the structure of the central organs of the Party

\* Subsequently the trio elected at the Congress co-opted Lenin, L. Krasin, Galperin, Zemlyachka, Maria Rosenberg and Gussarov to the Central Committee. Still later were co-opted Dubrovinsky, V. Karpov and A. Lyubimov.

as set up by the Second Congress. The Second Congress split into a majority and a minority. There arose the Bolshevik Party as an independent current and as a political party conducting an undeviating and consistent struggle against Russian and international opportunism.

*The Bolsheviks Fight Against the Opportunists and  
Conciliators after the Congress*

The closing of the Congress was followed by the outbreak of bitter warfare between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.

The first stage in the struggle was marked by the Congress of the Foreign League, at which the Mensheviks, headed by Martov and Trotsky, gained the upper hand. This Congress declared its lack of confidence in the Central Committee. After this Congress Plekhanov began to waver to the side of the Mensheviks. He insisted that Martov be returned to the editorial committee and that the old members, Axelrod, Zasulich and Potresov, who were out-balloted at the Second Congress, should be co-opted.

Lenin considered that the co-option of these members was directly contrary to the expressed will of the Second Congress and announced his resignation from the editorial committee of *Iskra*. Plekhanov remained alone on the editorial committee and forthwith co-opted Martov, Axelrod, Zasulich and Potresov. In this way *Iskra* became the organ of the Mensheviks.

Plekhanov's swing over to the Mensheviks had its roots in the past. His very earliest works manifested a tendency to overestimate the importance of the bourgeoisie and of bourgeois liberalism in the revolution, a tendency to regard the bourgeoisie as the prime motive force in the revolution, an expectation that the latter would be only partially successful, and that a compromise would be reached between the liberals and the tsarist autocracy. In the 'nineties Plekhanov betrayed a conciliatory attitude towards the bourgeois-liberal views of the legal "Marxists," and of P. Struve in particular. Only after a certain amount of wavering did Plekhanov adopt a definitely hostile attitude towards the Economists.

\* A. S. Martynov, former editor of the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, was later also co-opted to the editorial committee of *Iskra*.

As was stated above in the period of the old *Iskra*, when the general programme and the agrarian programme of the Party were being drafted, Plekhanov came into sharp collision with Lenin, whose attitude was consistently revolutionary and Marxian.

The struggle became more and more acute. The Central Committee consisted of Bolsheviks, while the central organ consisted of Mensheviks. But since all the former contacts were in the hands of the central organ, and since, moreover, it was backed by the League of Groups of Assistance residing abroad, which provided the material support, the Mensheviks enjoyed great advantages. The situation was not improved by the fact that differences began to manifest themselves among the Bolsheviks themselves: a compromise wing was formed, consisting of the majority of the members of the Central Committee, Noskov, Lyubimov, Krassin and Dubrovinsky, who advocated a policy of conciliation towards the Mensheviks. In the summer of 1904, peace was concluded between the Central Committee and the Mensheviks, the former agreeing to co-opt three Mensheviks. The editorial committee of *Iskra* was to remain as it was after the return of the old editors who had been out-balloted at the Second Congress. As a result of these concessions and compromises on the part of the Central Committee, the position of the Party in the summer of 1904 was entirely different from what it had been at the time of the Congress. In fact, the Central Committee had surrendered its power to the Mensheviks. Lenin, supported by a number of active Bolshevik Party workers from the provinces, uttered a most vigorous protest against such a compromise with the Mensheviks, and against those members of the Central Committee who had consented to this compromise, declaring it to be a direct violation of the will of the Second Congress. The protestors addressed themselves directly to the lower Party committees, many of which, as a result, severed connections with the Central Committee and the central organ. Three conferences were held—the Northern, Caucasian and Southern—at which a body known as the Bureau of the Committees of the Majority was set up.\* Since *Iskra*, the central organ

\* The members of the Bureau were Bogdanov, who for many years was a prominent leader of the Bolsheviks, M. M. Litvinov, Rumyantsev, M. M. Essen, S. I. Gussev, Rykov, Lyadov and Zemlyachka. These formed a new Bolshevik nucleus around Lenin.

of the Party, had passed into the hands of the Mensheviks, a new paper was founded, known as *Vperyod* (*Forward*), which began to appear towards the end of 1904 as the organ of the Bureau of the Committees of the Majority. In the summer of 1904 Lenin published his pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, in which he gave a detailed exposition of the views of the Bolsheviks and a complete analysis of the work of the Second Congress.

"The stronger our Party organisations, made up of *genuine* Social-Democrats," Lenin wrote, "and the less the waverings and instability *within* the Party, the broader and more varied, the richer and more fertile will be the influence of the Party on the working class masses who environ it and whom it leads."

Naturally, the Mensheviks would not admit that they wanted to throw the doors of the Party wide open to the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. Both at the Congress and after the Congress, Martov, Axelrod and Trotsky attempted to show that their concern was not for the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, but for the broad masses of the workers. What they wanted, they asserted, was that every striker should regard himself as a member of the Social-Democratic Party. Lenin mercilessly exposed the demagoguery of such declarations. He wrote:

"We must not confuse the Party as the vanguard of the working class with the whole class . . .

"We are the Party of a class, and therefore, *almost the whole class* (and in time of war or civil war, absolutely the whole class) must act under the leadership of our Party and must be associated with our Party as intimately as possible. But it would be sheer *Mamlovism*, sheer *khvostism*, to think that the whole class, or nearly the whole class, can ever under capitalism attain to the level of class consciousness and activity of its vanguard, its Social-Democratic Party" \*\*\*

In this pamphlet Lenin clearly exposed the Mensheviks as opportunists in questions of organisation, and their movement as a return to Economism and to the organisational practices existing prior to the founding of the *Iskra*. He wrote:

"The result was the new *Iskra*, which is forced to develop and deepen the error its editors committed at the Party Congress. The old *Iskra* taught the truths of revolutionary struggle. The new *Iskra* teaches the

\* The editors of the *Vperyod* were Lenin, Lunacharsky and Vorovsky

\*\* Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," *Selected Works*, Vol. I.

\*\*\* *Ibid*

worldly wisdom of yielding and getting on with everyone. The old *Iskra* was the organ of militant orthodoxy. The new *Iskra* brings us a recrudescence of opportunism—mainly on questions of organisation. The old *Iskra* earned the honourable dislike of both Russian and Western opportunists. The new *Iskra* has 'grown wise' and soon will no longer be ashamed of the praise lavished upon it by the extreme opportunists. The old *Iskra* marched unswervingly towards its goal, and there was no discrepancy between its words and its deeds. The inherent falsity of the position of the new *Iskra* inevitably—irrespective of anyone's will and intention—leads to political hypocrisy. It cries out against the circle spirit in order to camouflage the victory of the circle spirit over Party spirit. It pharisaically condemns a split, as if one can imagine any other way of avoiding a split in a party that is at all organised except by the submission of the minority to the majority. It insists on the necessity of taking revolutionary public opinion into account and at the same time, while it tries to conceal the praise of the Akimovs, it goes in for petty scandal-mongering about the committees of the revolutionary wing of the Party. Shame! How they have disgraced our old *Iskra*!" \*

The Mensheviks, even the Bolshevik compromisers, fiercely accused Lenin of sectarianism and of artificially exaggerating trifling questions of organisation, which, in their opinion, had no political significance whatever. Lenin gave an exhaustive reply to these accusations in his pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*.

"In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation. Divided by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by slave labour for the capitalists, constantly thrust back to the 'lower depths' of utter destitution, savagery and degeneration, the proletariat can become, and will inevitably become, an invincible force only when its ideological unity round the principles of Marxism is consolidated by the material unity of organisation, which unites millions of workers in the army of the working class. Neither the decrepit rule of Russian tsarism, nor the senile rule of international capital will be able to withstand this army. It will close its ranks more tightly than ever, in spite of all zig-zags and steps backward, in spite of all the opportunist phrases of the Girondists of modern Social-Democracy, in spite of the smug praise of out-of-date circle spirit, in spite of all the tinsel and fuss of *intellectual* anarchism." \*\*

The Mensheviks, of course, were also not idle. With the central organ of the Party under their control, and with considerable literary forces and material means at their disposal, they conducted a fierce campaign against the Bolsheviks and against Lenin in particular.

\* *Ibid*

\*\* *Ibid*

Rather belatedly, but with all the more ferocity, they concentrated their attack on Lenin's *What Is To Be Done*, on the doctrine he therein develops of the Party as the vanguard of the working class, and on his criticism of the theory of spontaneity of the Economists and the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists. They attempted to vindicate the Economists from what they declared were the unjust accusations of Lenin. In taking the opportunist theory of spontaneity under their protection, the Mensheviks revealed themselves as renegades from the position of the old *Iskra*. The campaign of the Mensheviks was chiefly inspired and directed by P. B. Axelrod. He it was who, in a series of articles contributed to *Iskra*, first accused the Bolsheviks, and Lenin in particular, of having abandoned the proletarian point of view and of having degenerated to a bourgeois position. He it was who charged them with being anti-proletarian Jacobins. Referring to Lenin, he wrote:

"Why should not that wretched history endow revolutionary-bourgeois democracy with a leader from the school of orthodox revolutionary Marxism? Why, was it not legal 'Marxism' that provided a leader (Struve) for the liberals? Indeed, why not?"

Trotsky took upon himself the task of popularising the ideas of Axelrod. In 1904 he wrote a pamphlet entitled *Our Political Tasks*, dedicated to "my dear teacher, Paul Borisovich Axelrod."<sup>\*</sup>

In this pamphlet Trotsky tried to blind the reader with a firework display of revolutionary phrases. He slurred over the errors of the Economists in order with all the more treacherous irresponsibility to launch an attack against the old *Iskra* which (unlike the Economists), he asserted, did nothing to develop initiative on the part of the proletariat, and the one aim of which was to substitute itself for the proletariat in the political arena. With particular ferocity Trotsky attacked what he called the "anti-democratic" tendencies of Lenin. Against Lenin personally Trotsky hurled the most reckless epithets ("the leader of the reactionary wing of the Party"; "the morally repugnant suspiciousness of Lenin"; "for Lenin, Marxism is a dish-rag," etc., etc.). Characteristic of the Menshevik Trotsky is the argu-

\* It was Trotsky who was the author of the epigram much quoted at the time: an abyss lies between the old and the new [*i.e.*, Menshevik—*N P*] *Iskra*. Trotsky did not endeavour to conceal the fact that the Mensheviks had abandoned the views of the old *Iskra*.

ment with which he endeavoured to defend the outrageous breach of Party discipline committed by the Mensheviks after the Second Congress.

"Is it really so difficult to understand that any movement of any serious dimensions and importance, if faced with the alternative either of silently destroying itself from a sense of discipline, or of fighting for its existence regardless of all motives of discipline, will undoubtedly choose the latter? There is sense in discipline only as long as it permits you to fight on behalf of that which you regard as right, and in the name of which you have undertaken to submit to that discipline."

Twenty years later Trotsky once again endeavoured to defend the theory of Party discipline he had expounded in the pamphlet dedicated to his "dear teacher, Axelrod," this time in his struggle against the Bolshevik Party of Lenin, which, as twenty years earlier, he accused of having degenerated to bourgeois democracy. But in this attempt Trotsky was finally exposed.

### *Significance of the Second Congress and the Split*

The period of *Iskra* and of the Second Congress is one of great historical importance in the life of the Party. It witnessed the consummation of the political formation of the Bolshevik Party. After it had defeated the first serious attempt of the bourgeoisie to gain control of the working class movement with the aid of legal "Marxism" and Economism, after it had overcome the opportunist tendencies in theory and tactics and primitive methods in organisation, and had delivered several powerful blows at European revisionism in the endeavours of the latter to gain a foothold in Russia, the Bolshevik Party succeeded in organising itself as the vanguard of the working class of the whole country, in dissociating itself from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties and of assuming the leadership of the growing revolutionary movement of the working class masses and of the revolutionary movement throughout the country.

Nevertheless, the revolutionary energy and fighting capacity of the Party was seriously hampered by the formation of a new agency of the bourgeoisie within the Party in the shape of Menshevism. This enemy proved to be much more dangerous and much more tenacious than Economism. The Mensheviks adopted

the revolutionary phraseology of the *Iskra* period in order to mask their true opportunist and petty-bourgeois nature. They declared themselves opposed to revisionism and Economism and that they were ready to perish on behalf of the class independence of the proletarian Party, and even raised no objections to the hegemony of the proletariat. They advocated an organisational policy that would submerge the Party in a petty-bourgeois and middle class swamp, under the pretext that they were defending the interests of the working class members of the Party against the Jacobin tendencies of the Bolsheviks, who, they declared, were aiming to subordinate the interests of the working class to the interests of the bourgeois revolution.

The revolutionary tinsel in which the Mensheviks decked themselves after the Second Congress even deceived certain of the Bolsheviks. It required Lenin's genius to penetrate the disguise of the Mensheviks and to expose them as new agents of the bourgeoisie, who had assumed the part played by the now bankrupt Economists.

One of the most consummate masters of revolutionary phraseology at the Second Congress was Trotsky. Here we already find Trotsky defending Menshevism with the most "Left" revolutionary eloquence.

Henceforward this capacity to deck opportunist merchandise in the most gaudy revolutionary trappings was to be one of the chief qualities of Trotskyism.

From the very outset Menshevism betrayed a tendency to form a united front with that current of West European Marxism which managed to combine orthodoxy in words with reformism in practice, the current which came to be known as centrism, or Kautskyism, and which bore within it the seed of the great betrayal of 1914. Under the guise of orthodoxy, Menshevism from its very inception proffered its reformist practices to the Russian proletariat, representing them to be the most superior European fighting methods. The Mensheviks called for the Europeanisation of the Russian working class movement, in other words, its adherence to the line of the Second International.

The Mensheviks very soon gained the following of a large section of the intellectuals associated with the working class movement, as well as of certain sections of the skilled labour aristocracy. In this way the Mensheviks and through them the



bourgeoisie, obtained an instrument for exercising its influence over the working class masses

That is why the struggle against the Mensheviks demanded so much of the energy of the vanguard of the proletariat rallied under the banner of the Bolsheviks.

Nevertheless, after the Second Congress, the Bolsheviks, thanks to the genius of their leader, Lenin, immediately succeeded in winning the adherence of the great number of the provincial Party organisations. This gave them a sufficiently strong position in the fight against the Mensheviks for a genuine party, a fight which lasted many years and ended with the final exposure of the Mensheviks and their expulsion from the Party.

The break with the Mensheviks was a natural consummation at a definite stage of the fight waged by *Iskra* against the Economists. It was the natural consummation of the fight against opportunism and against the compromisers with opportunism fought at the Second Congress itself.

The Second Congress may be regarded as the inaugural congress of the Bolshevik Party.

"The origins of Bolshevism," Lenin wrote in 1914, "are indissolubly associated with the struggle of what was known as Economism (opportunism, the rejection of the political struggle of the proletariat and the denial of the latter's leadership) against revolutionary Social-Democracy during the years 1897 to 1902. Economism, supported by the Bund, was defeated and extirpated by the campaign conducted by the old *Iskra* (Munich, London and Geneva, 1900 to 1903), which re-established the Social-Democratic Party (founded in 1898, but destroyed by arrests) on the basis of Marxism and revolutionary Social-Democratic principles.

"At the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. (August 1903) the *Iskra*-ists split: the majority supported the principles and tactics of the old *Iskra*, the minority turned towards opportunism, in which they met with the support of the old enemies of the *Iskra*, the Economists and the Bundists."

In 1920, in his "*Left Wing*" *Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin wrote:

"Bolshevism, as a trend of political thought and as a political party, exists since 1903. . . . Bolshevism arose in 1903 on the very firm foundation of Marxian theory. And the correctness of this—and only this—revolutionary theory has been proved not only by the experience of all countries during the entire nineteenth century but particularly by

the experience of the wanderings and vacillations, the mistakes and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia. For almost half a century—approximately between the 'forties and 'nineties of last century—advanced thinkers in Russia, under the oppression of an unprecedented, savage and reactionary tsarism, sought eagerly for the correct revolutionary theory, following each and every last word in Europe and America in this sphere, with astonishing diligence and thoroughness. Russia achieved Marxism, as the only correct revolutionary theory, virtually through *suffering*, by a half century of unprecedented torments and sacrifice, of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, painstaking search and study, testing in practice, disappointments, checking, and comparison with European experience. Thanks to the emigration enforced by tsarism, revolutionary Russia, in the second half of the nineteenth century, possessed such a wealth of international connections, and such excellent information about world forms and theories of the revolutionary movement as no other country in the world possessed."

### *Bolshevism in the International Arena*

We thus see that Bolshevism—or revolutionary Marxism of the new era of imperialism and proletarian revolution—arose out of the experience not only of Russia, but of the whole international working class movement. It manifested itself from the outset not as a specifically national Russian phenomenon, but as an international phenomenon. It did not have to await the world imperialist war in order to step into the international arena.

From the very start Bolshevism assumed a position of its own within the Second International, for its genuinely revolutionary Marxian principles stood out in crying contrast to the policy and practice of the Second International.

After the split which took place at the Second Congress, even the Left elements within the Second International took the part of the Mensheviks. The Menshevik leaders had close connections with the leaders of international Social-Democracy and they made use of these connections in order to wage a demagogic campaign against the Bolsheviks.

But the main reason was that opportunist tendencies had taken a strong hold even on the most Left elements within the Second International.

Not only Kautsky, but even Rosa Luxemburg, took the part of the Mensheviks on the questions of organisation discussed at the Second Congress.

"The Bolsheviks," as Comrade Stalin says, "were accused of betraying ultra-centrist and Blanquist tendencies. Later, these vulgar and philistine epithets were caught up by the Mensheviks and spread throughout the world." \*

Lenin's unconciliatory attitude towards opportunism was in too striking a contrast to all the traditions and practices of the Second International.

"How is it that Lenin could not get along with Plekhanov, who was regarded as having occupied the extreme Left position within the Second International, when even Bernstein and Millerand remained members of the European socialist parties?"—such was the way Kautsky and his like argued.

"You declare," Kautsky wrote to Comrade Lyadov when the latter informed him of the split, "that Axelrod and his friends tend towards opportunism and Economism? I cannot check the truth of your accusations, since I am not able to follow your literature. But I cannot help not believing them

"I have known Axelrod, Plekhanov and Zasulich too long as clear and consistently thinking minds."

The Mensheviks were particularly delighted with the support of Rosa Luxemburg, who occupied an extreme Left position among the German Marxists. The Menshevik editors supplied the following comment to an article of Rosa Luxemburg published in the new *Iskra*, in which she accused Lenin of 'all the mortal sins of the Blanquists, criticised Lenin's teachings regarding the Party, and lauded the theory of spontaneity:

"Comrade Lenin protested against the accusation that his was a Blanquist distortion of Marxism. In his latest book he pointed out that a similar accusation was hurled by the local opportunists at such 'orthodoxers' as Parvus and Luxemburg, from which the conclusion is to be drawn that the criticism levelled against Lenin is identical with the criticism made by the Bernsteinists. In view of this, it would be of particular interest to learn what is the opinion of the comrades mentioned regarding our present differences. Parvus' opinion regarding 'Leninism' was expressed even before any polemical discussion with the 'hard' tendency appeared in *Iskra*. When *One Step Forward, etc* was published we applied to R. Luxemburg to give her opinion of the book. For us her opinion was doubly valuable.... The reply to our request is the article here published, which, it is to be hoped, will make it clear to Comrade Lenin, that revolutionary Marxism does not share his views on organisation."

\* Stalin, "Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism," *Leninism*, Vol II, Moscow

Lenin wrote a vigorous reply to Rosa Luxemburg's article.

"Apart from a defence of unprincipledness," he wrote in an article entitled *You Cannot Feed Nightingales on Fables*, "there is absolutely nothing in the whole of the famous theory of organisation as a process (cf. particularly the articles of Rosa Luxemburg), a theory that vulgarises and prostitutes Marxism."\*

Somewhat later Lenin rejected the unprincipled attempt of the Second International leader, August Bebel, to reconcile the two parties—the revolutionary Bolshevik Party and the opportunist Menshevik party.

On the eve of the first Russian revolution, notwithstanding all hindrances and difficulties, Bolshevism assumed political and organisational form and entered the international arena. The split within the R.S.D.L.P. and the formation of the Bolshevik Party, a fighting proletarian party of a new type, signified a policy of breaking with opportunism internationally. In *What Is To Be Done*, Lenin wrote:

"History has now confronted us with an immediate task which is *more revolutionary than all the immediate tasks* that confront the proletariat of any other country. The fulfilment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but also (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction would place the Russian proletariat in the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat."\*\*

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. VII .

\*\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. II

## CHAPTER IV

### THE REVOLUTION OF 1905-07—DOWN TO THE DECEMBER INSURRECTION<sup>1</sup>

*The Russo-Japanese War—The labour movement and the Bolshevik Party on the eve of the 1905 Revolution—January 9, 1905—Political differences with the Mensheviks (the Zemstvo campaign)—International character of the 1905 Revolution—Two points of view on the revolution—The Third Party Congress—Resolutions on tactics—Organisational decisions of the Third Congress—Resolutions of the Menshevik Conference—A revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry—Views of Lenin and the Party on the growth of the 1905 Revolution into a socialist revolution—The revolutionary movement after January 9—Boycott of the Bulgin Duma—The October strike—Soviets of Workers' Deputies—Revolution and reaction mobilise forces—The December armed insurrection—Opportunism masked by revolutionary phrases—Trotskyism, a variant of Menshevism—The Bolshevik Party at the end of 1905*

#### *The Russo-Japanese War*

During the last decades of the nineteenth century the tsarist government had systematically usurped vast territories adjoining the Asiatic frontiers of Russia. This brought it into collision with Japanese imperialism, which at that time was already strongly developed. In January 1904, war with Japan broke out in the Far East.

Apart from its aspirations in the Far East, the tsarist government entered the Japanese war with the hope that victory over the external enemy would strengthen its position at home. But in the very first months of the war the tsarist military and naval forces suffered a series of drastic defeats. The Russian bourgeoisie at first took up a patriotic stand. The liberal intelligentsia was also seized by a spirit of anti-Japanese chauvinism. But when it became apparent that the tsarist government was not in a position to organise an army and navy which answered to modern technical demands and would be capable of defending the interests of the bourgeoisie in foreign fields, anti-government sentiments began to spread among wide sections of the bourgeoisie.

and the bourgeois intelligentsia. Naturally, the war was not popular among the working class. From the very outbreak of the war Lenin gave expression to those defeatist views for which he was subsequently assailed during the World War. In his article *The Fall of Port Arthur* (Port Arthur was the stronghold of the annexationist policy of the tsarist government in the Far East) he declared that

“ . . . the cause of Russian freedom and of the struggle of the Russian (and world) proletariat for socialism depends very largely on the military defeats suffered by the autocracy. The Russian people gained by the defeat of the autocracy. The capitulation of Port Arthur is the prologue to the capitulation of tsarism. The war is far from being at an end, but every step towards its prolongation widens the boundless unrest and indignation of the Russian people and hastens the moment of a new and great war, a war of the people against the autocracy, a war of the proletariat for freedom ” \*

It is noteworthy that even at that time the Mensheviks criticised Lenin for his “defeatist” views and accused him of speculating on the success of Japanese arms. They advanced the slogan, “Neither Victory nor Defeat”—a pacifist slogan—and advocated that the masses should exert pressure on the tsarist government in favour of peace.

At the end of 1904, influenced by the rapidly growing discontent of the masses, representatives of the liberal bourgeoisie and intelligentsia (journalists, engineers and lawyers) began to deliver political speeches at what were called banquets, in which they put forward more or less modest, but nevertheless constitutional, demands, or merely hinted at a constitution.

But liberal speeches delivered at banquets were unable to disturb the reactionary equanimity of the tsarist government. And a certain hesitation to be observed in the policy of the government at the end of 1904 was due, of course, not to those speeches, but to the military defeats and the growing discontent of the masses.

### *The Labour Movement and Bolshevik Party on the Eve of the 1905 Revolution*

The discontent of the workers had been rendered acute by the war and the crisis. The crisis was diverting even strikes that

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. VII.

started as economic strikes into the channels of the political struggle. The general strike which broke out in the Baku oil fields in December 1904 was the signal for mass political action all over the country. Among the demands put forward by the Baku workers were: the right to celebrate May Day, freedom of association and trade union organisation, freedom of the press and of speech, inviolability of person and domicile, the summoning of a Constituent Assembly, an eight-hour working day and the cessation of the war. The strike was led by the Party organisation in Baku. Hardly had the Baku strike ended, when a far more ominous strike broke out in St. Petersburg. The initiator of this strike, which led to the famous events of January 9, 1905, was Gapon's Society of Factory and Mill Workers, which had been pursuing its activities in St. Petersburg for about a year prior to the events of January 9. The certain amount of success enjoyed by this purely Zubatovist organisation, the aim of which was, under the guise of economic demands, to divert the working class from the political struggle, is to be explained by the inadequately developed class consciousness of the working class masses, as well as by the limited influence enjoyed by the Social-Democratic organisations among the workers at that time. The demonstration called for November 28, 1904, by the Party Committee of St. Petersburg was attended by very few workers; its participants consisted mostly of students, particularly from the universities. The demonstration held in Moscow several days later (December 6) enjoyed no greater success. The revolutionary movement of the working class was turning into the channels of the political struggle, but the necessary contact between the Social-Democratic organisations and the working class masses was still lacking. Even where strong Party organisations undoubtedly existed, such as in Moscow and St. Petersburg, their strength was nevertheless still inadequate.\*

\* The undeniable weakness of the Party organisations at the end of 1904 should not prevent us from noting the enormous growth of the Party in the early years of the new century. The report delivered by the Party to the International Congress held in Paris in 1900 could mention the existence of only six committees (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav and Kharkov) and three regularly functioning groups (Odessa, Nikolayev and Saratov).

According to incomplete data cited by the newspaper *Iskra*, after the Second Congress thirty-nine committees existed: Archangel, Astrakhan, the North-Western Committee, Voronezh, the Northern Committee, Don, Donets, Ekaterinoslav, Kiev, Kursk, Riga, Moscow, Polesye, Nizhni-Novgorod, Orel-

*. January 9, 1905*

This circumstance simplified the work of the Zubatovist organisations. It is true, as we have seen, that these societies suffered defeat in Moscow, Odessa and Minsk and that the working masses deserted them. But at first the Zubatovists enjoyed a certain amount of success. In St. Petersburg Gapon's Society organised eleven sections and established contacts in all the large factories. The leaders of the Gapon Societies, which were organised with the help of the police, sought to create the impression that they were genuinely in favour of the workers. But increasing numbers of the working class were being seized by political discontent, and this discontent was bound in the end to spread to the workers organised in the Gapon Society. Meetings began to be held in the sections, and their leaders were obliged either to desert them, or to endeavour in one way or another to gain control of the movement and divert it into another channel. It was the latter course that the leaders, headed by the priest, George Gapon, were forced to adopt by the march of events: they found themselves at the head of a movement, but originally had not the slightest intention of giving that movement a revolutionary direction.

The train of events was started by the discharge of four workers, members of the Gapon Society, from the Putilov Works. The unrest among the workers had reached such a pitch that this trivial and all too common occurrence in tsarist Russia was sufficient to bring the whole factory out on strike.

Delegates were sent by the Putilov workers to other factories with the result that large numbers of the Petersburg workers downed tools. At this point the excited workers conceived the idea of appealing to the tsar in person with a number of economic and political demands. The very contents of the appeal—its cardinal demands called for a Constituent Assembly and political liberties—indicated that notwithstanding the inadequate

Briansk, Ural, Poltava, Kremenchug, St Petersburg, Samara, Saratov, Smolensk, Crimea, Tver, Tula, Kharkov, Elizavetgrad, Nikolayev, Odessa, Kuban, Baku, Batumi, Tiflis, Mingrel-Imeretia, Guria, Chita, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk—as well as eleven groups. Zhitomir, Alexandrovsk, Berdichev, Bobruisk, Vasilsursk, Balta, Kherson, Cherkassy, Konotop, Novorossiysk and Derpt

At the end of 1905 not less than two-thirds of the committees supported the Bolsheviks



strength of the Bolshevik organisation, its ideological influence and the influence of its programme among the proletarian masses of St. Petersburg were very considerable. The contents of the petition to the tsar was drawn from the programme adopted by the Second Congress of the Party. This fact alone should have opened the eyes of the tsarist government to the logic of the developing events. When the workers marched to the palace the government met them with a volley of gunfire. On the part of the tsarist government this was a perfectly natural act.

But it was equally natural that it dealt a drastic blow to the monarchist illusions which until this time were so widespread among the Russian proletariat. January 9 marked the beginning of the first Russian revolution.

How profound was the impression created by Bloody Sunday (January 9) on the masses of the proletariat of St. Petersburg is demonstrated by the fact that when the government, realising what a severe blow it had suffered, appointed a commission, including representatives from the workers, to investigate the causes of the movement, the St. Petersburg workers at their factory elections selected representatives sympathetic to the Bolsheviks. These representatives thereupon declared that until the working class was guaranteed elementary political liberties they categorically declined to participate in the work of the commission.

As a result, Senator Shidlovsky's commission was not even able to commence its labours. After the events of January 9 the broad mass of the proletariat of St. Petersburg definitely entered the path of revolution. The events of January 9 not only created a profound impression on the St. Petersburg workers, the eye-witnesses of the shooting, but aroused tremendous unrest among the proletarian masses throughout the whole country

### *Political Differences with the Mensheviks (The Zemstvo Campaign)*

The profound political character of the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, which at the Second Congress were centred mainly around questions of organisation, soon became revealed in the atmosphere of rising revolution. They now assumed a particularly acute form in relation to bour-

geois liberalism. This question had already come to the fore at the Second Congress (the Potresov-Starover resolution).

When the upper ranks of the liberal bourgeoisie and intelligentsia started the banquet movement, the Menshevik Editorial Board of the *Iskra* announced a plan for what they called a "Zemstvo campaign." In this plan *Iskra* recommended the workers to attend the banquets of the liberals and announce their demands, but in so modest a form as not to frighten the liberals. The liberals would support these demands, and the workers, in their turn, would support the demands advanced by the liberals at the banquets. *Iskra* considered these tactics a very high form of political struggle of the working class. The idea of the Mensheviks was to harness the working class to the liberals' banquet campaign in order to lend the latter greater significance in the eyes of the tsarist government.

In reply to the plan of the Menshevik Editorial Board, Lenin issued a pamphlet entitled *The Zemstvo Campaign and the "Iskra" Plan*, in which he characterised the view of *Iskra* as opportunist, one which subordinated the struggle of the working class to the interests and demands of the liberal bourgeoisie. Not at banquets must revolution be created, not before the Zemstvos must demonstrations be made in favour of demands, which in effect amounted to a mere constitutional patching of the tsarist system. The workers must demonstrate in the streets, before the police stations; they must demonstrate by mass action in favour of their own revolutionary demands; they must fight their struggle independently of the liberal bourgeoisie; for, while the liberal bourgeoisie might be in opposition to the tsarist government, they could not be interested in carrying the revolution to completion. On the contrary, the liberal bourgeoisie were interested in coming to an agreement with the autocracy. In a word, it was not the business of the working class to league itself with the political demands of liberal society and thus trail in the wake of the liberals.

At the end of 1904, conditions in the country were very different from those which prevailed in the days of the old *Iskra*, in the period preceding the revolution. Then it was merely a question of preparing for revolution. The opposition of the liberal bourgeoisie was an important factor in the disintegration of the tsarist regime. At that period the liberal bourgeoisie did

not hesitate to demonstrate openly their "love for the workers," hoping to be the prime gainers from the struggle developing between the working class and tsarism. But events had now definitely reached the stage of revolution, in which the working class had absolutely no grounds for counting on the co-operation of the bourgeoisie, for the working class had put forward a consistent democratic programme for the abolition of tsarism. Hence, all the working class could aim for was to neutralise the liberal bourgeoisie, while bearing in mind that in the future a direct understanding between the bourgeoisie and tsarism, directed against the rising revolution, was inevitable.

With the approach of the revolution the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, which at the Second Congress had borne a political as well as an organisational character, became rapidly greater. Lenin and his immediate collaborators developed an intense political campaign against the Mensheviks in the newspaper *Vperyod* (*Forward*).

### *International Character of the 1905 Revolution*

The strikes of July 1903, embracing as they did enormous numbers of workers and bearing a markedly political character, were portentous of the approaching revolution.

The increasing impoverishment of the peasant masses, the only solution for which lay in the radical abolition of the large estates, guaranteed the proletariat the support of the broad masses of the peasantry in the revolution. The events of January 9 and the growth of the revolutionary struggle of the masses indicated that the revolution maturing in Russia was of great international significance. It was the first revolution after a protracted period of "peaceful" capitalist development; it was the first revolution of the new era of imperialism, which brought all the antagonisms of the capitalist system to a pitch of extreme aggravation. As Stalin points out:

" . . . tsarist Russia was the home of oppression of every kind—capitalist, colonial and militarist—of oppression in its most inhuman and barbarous form. Who does not know that in Russia the omnipotence of capital was merged with the despotism of tsarism, the aggressive character of Russian nationalism with the rule of the tsarist hangmen over non-Russian peoples, the exploitation of whole regions—Turkey, Persia and China—with the seizure of these regions by tsarism, with

wars of conquest? Lenin was right in saying that tsarism was 'militarist-feudal imperialism.' Tsarism concentrated within itself the most negative sides of imperialism.

"Again, tsarist Russia was an immense reserve force for Western imperialism, not only in that it gave free entry to foreign capital which controlled decisive branches of Russian economy like fuel and metallurgy, but also in that it could furnish millions of soldiers to the Western imperialists .

"... tsarism was not only the watchdog of imperialism in Eastern Europe, but also the agent of Western imperialism in squeezing hundreds of millions from the population by way of interest on loans floated in Paris, London, Berlin and Brussels.

"Finally, tsarism was the faithful ally of Western imperialism in the partitioning of Turkey, Persia, China, etc. . . .

"It follows from this, however, that whoever wanted to strike at tsarism necessarily raised his arm against imperialism, whoever rose against tsarism had at the same time to rise against imperialism, for whoever overthrew tsarism had at the same time to overthrow imperialism, if his intention really was not only to smash tsarism but to extirpate it without leaving a trace. Thus the revolution against tsarism approximated to and had to grow into a revolution against imperialism, into a proletarian revolution."

### *Two Points of View on the Revolution*

At the beginning of 1905 the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks embraced every fundamental political question of the day: they concerned the character of the current revolution, the allies of the proletariat in the revolution, methods of conducting the revolutionary struggle, armed uprising and a Provisional Revolutionary Government. But the essential question was—should the proletariat be the hegemon (the leader) of the rising revolution, or should it serve as an instrument in the hands of the liberal bourgeoisie?

The Bolsheviks maintained that since January 9 the revolution had become a fact. The revolution was a democratic revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat. In its social character it was a bourgeois revolution, or, more exactly, a bourgeois-peasant revolution, for its aim was the radical abolition of the survivals of feudalism, viz., the large landed estates and tsarism. But the revolution was taking place in a highly developed stage of capitalism throughout the world and a relatively high stage of devel-

\* Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism," *Leninism*, Vol. I.

opment of capitalism in Russia, which had not been the case with any previous bourgeois revolution. The hegemon (leader) of the revolution and its principal motive force would be the working class. Hence, the vast international significance of the revolution, the inevitability of its growing into a socialist revolution and of passing beyond mere national boundaries. While it was bourgeois-peasant in its social character, the revolution would be proletarian in its principal methods and forms. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, from the fact that the revolution was bourgeois in character, drew the conclusion that the guiding force of the revolution must be the bourgeoisie. They recommended the working class to base itself primarily on this "ally." The Mensheviks held that victory over the autocracy was impossible without the assistance, or, more precisely, without the leading participation of the liberal bourgeoisie. They placed their stakes on the liberal bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks categorically declared that the liberal bourgeoisie could not serve as a revolutionary ally of the proletariat. The peasantry alone could be its ally, for the peasantry was interested in the radical elimination of large landlordism. In conjunction with the proletariat, and under its leadership, the peasantry would fight the struggle against tsarism to an end. Thus, the Mensheviks in fact rejected the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolutionary movement, and assigned this role to the liberal bourgeoisie.

The revolution could triumph—the Bolsheviks declared—only by overthrowing the tsarist autocracy by means of armed insurrection, primarily in the main industrial centres, and with the determined support of the peasantry. The proletariat must assume the leadership of the armed insurrection, while the party of the proletariat must prepare and organise the armed insurrection.

The Mensheviks declared that preparation for armed insurrection was sheer Blanquism and revolutionary adventurism. It was necessary to wait until the masses themselves rose spontaneously. Meanwhile the masses must be imbued with the ideological realisation of the necessity for struggle. In the opinion of the Mensheviks, the arming of the masses in the event of an uprising must also proceed spontaneously. But if the tsarist autocracy, in order to forestall an uprising, consented to make concessions, and voluntarily relinquished power to the liberal bourgeoisie?

In that case an uprising would obviously be superfluous, for Russia would become a constitutional country. While not declaring so openly, the Mensheviks aimed at avoiding an uprising and of solving the antagonisms within the country by means of a compromise between the autocracy and the liberal bourgeoisie.

In this connection arose the question of a Provisional Revolutionary Government. In what concrete form could one visualise the triumph of the insurrection? In the form of the overthrow of the government—the Bolsheviks answered. But if the old government were overthrown a new government must take its place. Who would take part in that government? Should the revolutionary Social-Democrats be represented in that government? The Bolsheviks averred that a decisive victory of the revolution over the autocracy would lead to the establishment of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, and that the Social-Democrats should participate in the organ of that dictatorship, *viz.*, a Provisional Revolutionary Government. For otherwise that government would not be sufficiently revolutionary; it would fall under the influence of the bourgeois liberals and would betray the revolution. The Social-Democrats must, under favourable circumstances, participate in that government in order to carry the revolution to its completion.

The Mensheviks assumed a diametrically opposite position. The Russian revolution was a bourgeois revolution—they declared. The bourgeois revolution must place the bourgeoisie in power. Hence, it was not the business of the working class and of its Party to participate in the revolutionary government. Let the bourgeoisie alone govern the country and the working class assume the role of an opposition. To lend their argument a revolutionary appearance, the Mensheviks declared that the working class could not possibly participate in a bourgeois government of any kind.

But the Bolsheviks held that the Russian revolution must not be regarded as an ordinary bourgeois revolution. The Russian revolution would not only be a bourgeois-peasant revolution,\*

\* The difference between a bourgeois revolution in general and a bourgeois-peasant revolution in particular was explained by Lenin as follows: "Every peasant revolution which is levelled against mediaevalism, while the whole of the social economy is of a capitalist character, constitutes a bourgeois revolution. But not every bourgeois revolution constitutes a peasant revolution. If in a country where agriculture is organised entirely on capit-

not only would it completely emancipate the country from survivals of serfdom, but it would also be the prologue to a socialist revolution; and the more fundamental the triumph of the working class in the democratic revolution, the sooner would the socialist revolution materialise. In order to achieve complete victory, in order to permit the Russian revolution, after it had utterly defeated tsarism, to proceed to a socialist revolution, and in order to arouse the proletariat of the West, it was essential that the Social-Democrats should participate in the Provisional Revolutionary Government.<sup>1</sup>

alist lines, the capitalist landowners, with the aid of wage-workers, were to carry out an agrarian revolution, by abolishing private property in land, for instance, this would constitute a bourgeois revolution, but by no means a peasant revolution. Or if a revolution took place in a country where the agrarian system was so wedded to the general capitalist system that it could not be abolished without abolishing capitalism, and if, say, that revolution put the industrial bourgeoisie in power in place of the autocratic bureaucracy—this too would constitute a bourgeois revolution, but by no means a peasant revolution. In other words, a bourgeois country can exist without a peasantry, and a bourgeois revolution may take place in such a country without the peasantry. A revolution may take place in a country with a considerable peasant population and yet not be a peasant revolution, i.e., a revolution that does not revolutionise the agrarian conditions especially affecting the peasantry, and does not bring forward the peasantry as one of the social forces accomplishing the revolution" (Lenin, "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution," *Selected Works*, Vol. III)

<sup>1</sup> In an article entitled "Social-Democracy and a Provisional Revolutionary Government" which appeared in Nos 13 and 14 of the newspaper *Vperyod* of March 28 and 30, 1905, Lenin wrote: "He [the revolutionary Social-Democrat] will dream—he must dream, if he is not a hopeless philistine—of how, after the vast experience of Europe, after the unparalleled sweep of energy of the working class in Russia, we shall succeed as never before in lighting a revolutionary beacon that will illumine the path of the ignorant and oppressed masses, of how we shall succeed, standing as we do on the shoulders of a number of revolutionary generations of Europe, in carrying out all the democratic reforms, the whole of our minimum programme with hitherto unprecedented completeness. We shall succeed in establishing the Russian revolution, not as a movement of a few months' duration, but as a movement of many years, so that it will lead, not merely to a few paltry concessions from the powers that be, but to the complete overthrow of these powers. And if we succeed in doing that, then . . . then the revolutionary conflagration will spread all over Europe, the European worker, languishing under bourgeois reaction, will rise in his turn and will show us 'how the thing is done'; then the revolutionary wave in Europe will sweep back again into Russia and will convert an epoch of a few revolutionary years into an era of several revolutionary decades, then . . . but we shall have plenty of time to say what we shall do 'then,' not from the cursed remoteness of Geneva, but at meetings of thousands of workers in the streets

Such were the differences of opinion that developed between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks at the beginning of 1905. They were differences of a most profound character concerning the nature of the revolution that had set in. Was that revolution a bourgeois revolution, which would end with the establishment of the power of the bourgeoisie for many years to come, and endow the working class with only a few political rights in the struggle for its interests; or was it a revolution which was democratic-peasant in its social character and proletarian in its methods and forms, a revolution directed not only against tsarism and the landlords, but also against the endeavours of the liberal bourgeoisie to arrive at an agreement with the tsarist regime; was it, in a word, a bourgeois-democratic revolution with the prospect of growing into a socialist revolution? That was how the question stood. The differences grew as days and months elapsed and forced the Bureau of Committees of the Majority to insist still more firmly on the summoning of a Third Congress.

### *The Third Party Congress*

Early in 1905 a number of the members of the Central Committee were arrested. Those who remained at liberty, headed by L. B. Krassin, realising that political compromise with the Mensheviks would result in capitulation to the Mensheviks, and that the differences were growing ever more acute, decided to abrogate the agreement made with the Mensheviks several months

of Moscow and St Petersburg, at the free assemblies of Russian 'muzhiks' " (Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. III)

Here, as we see, Lenin stresses the profoundly international character of the Russian revolution the prospect of its growing into a socialist revolution and extending beyond its national boundaries. He points out as a self-evident fact that the revolution in European countries, stimulated by a triumphant revolution in Russia, will react reciprocally on the Russian revolution. But neither here nor elsewhere does Lenin make the development of the Russian revolution from a bourgeois democratic into a socialist revolution unconditionally dependent on a revolution in Europe, still less on the triumph of that revolution.

In No 14 of the *Vperyod*, dated March 30, in an article entitled "A Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry," Lenin wrote "Under the conditions of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship we shall mobilise tens of millions of the poor of the towns and country, we shall make the Russian political revolution the prologue of the European socialist revolution" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. VII)



previously to which Lenin had so heatedly protested. Having broken with the Mensheviks, the Central Committee joined forces with the Bureau of Committees of the Majority, which was already making active preparations for a Congress. The Central Committee and the Bureau of Committees of the Majority jointly convened the Third Congress of the Party in London in May 1905.

Delegates were sent to the Congress from twenty-nine committees: twenty Bolshevik committees and nine Menshevik committees. But the Menshevik delegates failed to attend the Congress. Together with the Editorial Board of the *Iskra* and the Party Council, they held a separate conference, which sat simultaneously with the Third Congress. Thus, the Third Congress was a purely Bolshevik Congress. It was attended by delegates from the Bolshevik Committees, the Central Committee, the Bureau of Committees of the Majority and the Editorial Board of *Vperyod*.\*

### *Resolutions on Tactics*

The Third Congress passed resolutions on every vital question of Party policy. On the subject of armed insurrection the resolution declared that this question had become urgent and that the Party must assume leadership of the armed uprising; its success required not merely political, but also technical preparation and a plan of the armed uprising must be drawn up. The Congress fully realised that the insurrection would necessitate most ruthless methods of warfare, and repudiated the Menshevik accusation of Blanquism and Jacobinism.

"To raise the bugbear of Jacobinism at the moment of revolution," Lenin declared at the Third Congress, "is the utmost banality. . . .

\* The following committees were represented at the Congress: Voronezh, Kursk, Moscow, Nikolayev, Nizhni-Novgorod, Orel, Odessa, Polesseye, St. Petersburg, Riga, Samara, Saratov, the Northern Committee, the North-Western Committee, Tver, Tula and the Urals. Delegates at the Third Congress still alive at the present day are: Mikha Tskhakaya, L. B. Kamenev, Anashkin (a Baku worker), A. I. Rykov, Zemlyachka, Litvinov (now Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R.), Kiamolnikov, P. A. Krassikov, M. Lyadov and N. K. Krupskaya. Delegates to the Third Congress since deceased, besides V. I. Lenin, were: L. B. Krassin, "Alyosha" Dzhaparidze (one of the twenty-six Baku commissars shot in the autumn of 1918), V. V. Vorovsky, I. S. Sammer, M. K. Vladimirov, A. Bogdanov (Malinovsky), A. Lunacharsky, and P. P. Rumyantsev.

Even if we gained possession of St Petersburg and guillotined Nicholas, we should still be faced by several Vendées [Lenin prophetically foresaw 1918—*N P*]. . . . We also prefer to get rid of Russian despotism by the 'plebeian' method and leave the Girondist method to the *Iskra*. . . . The revolutionary mood of the proletariat is growing daily and hourly. At such a moment Martynov's views are not only absurd, they are criminal. . . ."

The attitude of the Congress towards armed insurrection was based on Lenin's teachings regarding the role of the Party, his criticism in *What Is To Be Done* of the theory of spontaneity, and the views expressed in that pamphlet regarding tactics as a plan.

The Third Congress adopted a resolution on the subject of a Provisional Revolutionary Government, in which it was declared that in order to carry the revolution to its conclusion the Social-Democrats must, if the relation of forces favoured, participate in a Provisional Revolutionary Government which would serve as the organ of the successful uprising of the people and as a means of consolidating the gains of the uprising.

Another resolution dealt with the tactics of the government on the eve of the upheaval. It declared that, on the one hand, the government was trying to fool the people by verbal and empty concessions that bound it in no way, while on the other, it was organising bands of armed Black Hundreds. . . . The attempt to fool the people must be counteracted by intensive agitation and propaganda; the attempt to arm Black Hundreds must be counteracted by creating fighting squads, by organising the armed forces of revolution and preparing for armed insurrection.

An extremely important resolution adopted by the Third Congress dealt with the attitude of the Party towards the peasant movement. The agrarian programme of the Second Congress had advocated the confiscation and handing over to the peasants of the *otrezki*, i.e., the land taken from the peasants by the landlords at the time of the "liberation," as well as the return to the peasants of the redemption payments extorted from them by the landlords after the "liberation." The agrarian programme of the Second Congress did not speak of the confiscation of the whole of the estates of the landlords, although Lenin had proposed this

\* Lenin, "The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P." *Collected Works*, Vol VII.

when the programme was being drafted, and indeed long before in his pamphlet *What the "Friends of the People" Are, etc.* But as a matter of fact, the revolutionary agrarian movement of the peasants had from the very outset become a struggle for the estates of the landlords. The Bolsheviks drew a definite political conclusion from this fact, namely, that in the present revolution the peasants, unlike the liberal bourgeoisie, were a trusty and reliable ally of the proletariat. The peasants, and in particular the poor and middle peasants, who formed the greater mass of the peasantry, could hope to obtain land only by the complete and definite abolition of the autocracy, which was intimately bound up with large landlordism. Hence it was to the interest of the peasants to pursue a common path with the proletariat and bring the revolution to its conclusion. In conformity with these views the Third Congress adopted its resolution on the attitude of the Party to the peasant movement. The resolution stated that the Party would support the peasants in their revolutionary struggle to the point of the confiscation of all landed estates, and that the Party would support the creation of revolutionary peasants' committees to serve as the local organs of revolutionary power and of the seizure and distribution of the landed estates. These peasants' committees were the prototype of the future Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. The resolution further spoke of the necessity for the independent organisation of the agricultural proletariat against the rural bourgeoisie. The whole policy of the Party in the rural districts was based on the existence of two social wars in the Russian countryside: one, the war of the peasant against the landlord, and the other, the war of the rural proletarian and semi-proletarian against the rural bourgeois, or kulak.

Another resolution of the Third Congress dealt with the attitude of the Party towards the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the liberals. At that time the Socialist-Revolutionaries were a revolutionary party, since they favoured republican demands and revolutionary methods of fighting the tsarist autocracy, and enjoyed a certain amount of authority among the revolutionary elements of the peasantry and intelligentsia. While conforming to the resolution of the Second Congress on the S.R.'s, i.e., while declaring that their activities were harmful because of their rejection of an independent class party of the workers and their

pseudo-socialistic phraseology confusing the minds of the proletariat, the Third Congress nevertheless recognised the necessity of concluding fighting agreements with the S.R.'s. The tactics of the Bolsheviks towards the S.R.'s at the Third Congress were a direct continuation of the tactics pursued by Lenin towards the Narodniki in the 'nineties as set forth in *What the "Friends of the People" Are, etc*, and in his polemical article against Struve. These tactics took account of the double nature of the Narodnik movement as the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie, and of its vacillating position between the proletariat and the liberal bourgeoisie. In its resolution on the liberals the Congress enjoined the Party to expose the half-hearted, compromising position of the liberals and to counter the liberal slogans of compromise with tsarism by the revolutionary slogans of the Party.

Finally, the Third Congress adopted a resolution dealing with the fraction that had split off from the Party, *viz.*, the Mensheviks. The resolution qualified Menshevism as a current akin to Economism, and enumerated the Menshevik deflections from the policy of revolutionary Social-Democracy on organisational and political questions. As regards organisational questions, the Congress accused the Mensheviks of minimising "the significance of the elements of consciousness in the proletarian struggle and of subordinating them to the elements of spontaneity." The resolution recorded that the Mensheviks advocated "the principle of the organisational process, which did not conform with systematically planned work of the Party, while in practice they were responsible in a host of instances for a system of deviations from the Party discipline." Furthermore, the Mensheviks were accused of "preaching to the less enlightened elements of the Party the wide application of the elective principle, which was at variance with the objective conditions existing in Russia." On the subject of tactics, the resolution noted the endeavours of the Mensheviks to narrow the scope of Party work by declaring themselves opposed to "the Party conducting completely independent tactics in regard to the bourgeois-liberal parties, to the possibility and desirability of the Party assuming the role of organiser of the uprising of the people, and to the participation of the Party under any circumstances in a Provisional Revolutionary-Democratic Government." The Congress just

ly pointed to the ideological connection between Menshevism and Economism. It characterised the views of the Mensheviks on organisational questions, views which subsequently led the Mensheviks into the camp of counter-revolution, as deviations from the principle of revolutionary Social-Democracy. The Congress emphasised the necessity of waging energetic ideological warfare against these deviations and in its resolution declared that the Mensheviks could be accepted into the Party only on condition that they, "by recognising the Party Congresses and the Party statutes would wholeheartedly observe Party discipline," in other words, renounce their Menshevism. The Congress empowered the Central Committee to dissolve such Menshevik organisations as did not recognise the decisions of the Congress. The Congress rejected all the conciliatory proposals intended to mitigate the fight against the Mensheviks. Lenin conceived the liquidation of the split as possible only by the subordination of the Mensheviks to the decisions of the Bolshevik Congress and their ideological and organisational capitulation, that is, by the victory of the Bolsheviks in their fight for the Party, and not by the creation of a dual party, on the model of the parties of the Second International, in which the Bolsheviks would peacefully cohabit with the Mensheviks.

A "dual party" was Trotsky's slogan in 1905, and not Lenin's. How clearly Lenin already realised the profundity and irreconcilability of the differences of views of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks may be seen from his comments on Olminsky's report made February 7, 1905, *i.e.*, two months prior to the Third Congress:

"The Second Congress—a split (from the moment of the organisation of the minority). *Vperyod* but a continuation of the split. Two parties. The names *majority* and *minority* unsuitable. Theoretical differences have grown" \*

Later, having before him the text of the resolutions adopted by the Menshevik Conference, which was held parallel with the Congress, Lenin commented on the resolution on the Mensheviks passed by the Congress as follows:

"... the new *Iskra*-ists are the epigones of Economism not only by virtue of their origin at the Second Party Congress, but also by their

\* Lenin, "Plan of the Report by V. V.—M. C. Olminsky" *Miscellany*, Vol. V, 1

present manner of presenting the tactical tasks of the proletariat in the democratic revolution. They too represent an intellectual-opportunist wing of the Party. In the sphere of organisation they began with the anarchistic individualism of the intellectuals and finished with 'disorganisation-as-a-process,' and the 'rules' adopted by the Conference permit Party literature to be separated from the Party organisation, introduce an indirect and almost four-stage system of elections, a system of Bonapartist plebiscites instead of democratic representation, and finally the principle of 'agreement' between the part and the whole!\*

In Party tactics they slipped down on the same inclined plane. In the 'plan of the Zemstvo campaign' they declared that the sending of deputations to Zemstvo members was the 'highest type of demonstration,' since they could discover only two active forces operating on the political scene (on the eve of January 9!)—the government and bourgeois democracy. They made the urgent task of arming the people 'more profound' by substituting the practical slogan to arm by the slogan to arm the people with a burning desire to arm themselves. The problem of an armed uprising, of the Provisional Government and of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship are now distorted and weakened in their official resolutions. 'Lest the bourgeoisie desert'—this final chord of their last resolution throws a glaring light on the question as to whither their path is leading the Party." \*\*

### *Organisational Decisions of the Third Congress*

Of great importance are the decisions adopted by the Third Congress in the sphere of Party organisation. The three central bodies set up by the Second Congress were replaced by a single body—the Central Committee—which was endowed with plenary powers in the intervals between Congresses. The Central Committee was empowered to appoint the Editorial Board of the central Party paper. The Party Council, which had been a separate organisation acting as an intermediary between the Central Committee and the central organ, was entirely abolished. The newspaper *Proletary* became the central organ of the Party after the Third Congress.\*\*\* The first clause in the Party statutes, which at the Second Congress had been adopted in the opportunist formulation of the Mensheviks, was replaced at the Third Congress by Lenin's formulation.

\* Lenin is referring to the resolution on organisational questions adopted by the Menshevik Conference

\*\* Lenin, "The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," *Selected Works*, Vol III

\*\*\* The Editorial Board of the paper after the Congress consisted of Lenin, Lunacharsky, Olminsky and Teodorovich.

At the same time, certain amendments were introduced into the Party statutes in the direction of democratising the Party apparatus. The tendency to democratise and to increase the number of working class members of the Party apparatus found expression in the speech made by Lenin, who declared that for every two intellectual committee members there should be at least eight workers.

What was the reason for this tendency towards democracy? At the time of the Third Congress the Party embraced a far greater number of workers, especially in the provinces, than was the case at the time of the Second Congress. It was for this reason that Lenin issued the slogan of promoting workers to the committees that served as the leading local organs of the Party. Lenin clearly realised that the limitation of inner-Party democracy hampered the development of initiative among the members of the Party; but this limitation was a consequence of the conditions in which the Party existed, of the fact that it had to carry on its activities under the tsarist yoke and was subject to constant persecution. On the other hand, Lenin explained that the necessity of severely limiting inner-Party democracy at times was due to the composition of the Party. The intellectuals, who had joined the Party in large numbers in the atmosphere of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, had to be kept in a firm grip, in order to counteract their tendency to opportunism and organisational anarchy. Only a powerful working class Party core and firm discipline within the Party could prevent the non-proletarian elements in the Party, who had not yet been remoulded by the influences of Party life, from taking advantage of inner-Party democracy in order to bring the Party under bourgeois influences.

The vast growth, on the one hand, of the class consciousness of the proletarian masses and the fact that they were joining the Party in increasing numbers in the interval between the Second and Third Congresses and, on the other hand, the improvement of political conditions owing to the weakening of the machinery of the tsarist autocracy, explain why the statutes adopted by the Third Congress considerably widened the scope of democracy and the elective principle as compared with the statutes adopted by the Second Congress. The statutes adopted by the Third Congress provided that also in the future the delegates to Party Congresses were to be elected by the committees.

But the Third Congress marked a big stride in the direction of introducing democracy within the Party and of increasing the working class membership of the Party, in connection with which the Congress considerably enlarged the autonomous right of the local organisations.

The proportion of workers within the Party was still entirely inadequate. Among the delegates to the Third Congress there was only one worker. Even in St. Petersburg the Party organisation in the spring of 1905 counted no more than one thousand organised workers. The other organisations were numerically still smaller. The monthly budget of the St. Petersburg organisation did not exceed 4,000 rubles, and these funds were derived chiefly from contributions made by intellectuals. Membership dues from workers comprised an insignificant part of the Party budget. The Party circles in the factories were frequently smaller numerically than the organisations in the middle and higher educational institutions.

The *Report on the Third Congress* published by the newly elected Central Committee\* concluded with the following words emphasising the vast international significance of the Russian revolution:

"A victory in the impending democratic revolution means that we shall make a gigantic stride towards our socialist aim, that we shall relieve Europe of the heavy yoke of a reactionary military power and shall help our brothers, the class conscious workers of the whole world, to march forward to socialism more rapidly, determinedly and boldly . . ."

### *Resolutions of the Menshevik Conference*

Simultaneously with the Third Congress the Mensheviks held their First Conference. This Conference was attended by representatives from nine committees, as compared with the twenty committees represented at the Bolshevik Congress.

The Conference rejected all measures of technical preparation for armed insurrection. Resolutions had been submitted dealing with the arming of the masses and with work among the troops,

\* The Central Committee elected by the Third Congress consisted of five members: Lenin, Krassin, Bogdanov, Postalovsky and Rykov

\*\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. VII.



but the Conference did not even discuss them, pleading lack of time. On the other hand, it adopted verbose resolutions dealing with the economic struggle, clubs, and participation in elections to representative institutions. This was but a reflection of the belief of the conference members in a peaceful, protracted and half-way revolution, and that a compromise should be reached with the autocracy and the liberal bourgeoisie.

The resolution dealing with work among the peasants, although it contained a clause advocating the transfer of the landlords' estates to the peasantry, nevertheless made the transfer dependent on the decision of a Constituent Assembly, to which was to be submitted the demand for the creation of peasants' committees for the abolition of the survivals of serfdom (the Bolsheviks advocated that these committees should be set up and the land seized immediately and thus face the Constituent Assembly with a *'fait accompli'*).

But even this seemingly revolutionary resolution was entirely without practical significance, since from the point of view of the Mensheviks the possibility of summoning a Constituent Assembly was doubtful, and since they based their policy on the assumption that the autocracy and the liberal bourgeoisie would arrive at a compromise.

The resolution dealing with seizure of power and participation in a Provisional Government declared that

"a definite victory of the revolution over tsarism may be marked either by the formation of a Provisional Government, resulting from the triumphant uprising of the people, or by the revolutionary initiative of one or other representative institution, which, under the direct revolutionary pressure of the people, will take upon itself the task of organising a National Constituent Assembly."

Apparently, the tsarist government was to remain in power. A liberal bourgeois "representative institution" was to summon a Constituent Assembly, but the tsarist government was to remain in existence. From the point of view of the Mensheviks this was one of the variations of a definite (!) victory of the revolution.

The Conference considered it impossible to participate in a Provisional Revolutionary Government which would emerge from the armed insurrection of the workers and peasants, unless a socialist revolution occurred in Western Europe. This latter condition, which assumed no obligation whatever as regards to revo-

lutionary action, but on the contrary made such action conditional on what might happen in Europe, was intended to throw dust into the eyes of the revolutionary workers. Naturally, the Provisional Government of the Mensheviks was not a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.\* What they had in mind was a decently conducted bourgeois government.

The Menshevik Conference appointed an Organisation Committee to guide the organisations that had split away from the Party

Upon the conclusion of the Third Congress and the First Menshevik Conference, Lenin in his pamphlet *The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* summed up the significance of the ideological and organisational split that had taken place. In this pamphlet Lenin develops the guiding political idea that formed the basis of the tactics of the Bolsheviks during the 1905 Revolution (and long afterwards), viz., the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

The Mensheviks categorically rejected the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. In fact, they rejected the proletariat's leadership of the revolution, in other words, the hegemony of the proletariat. The Mensheviks regarded the Russian revolution as a bourgeois revolution, they deferred socialist aims to the distant future. They considered that the power of government must pass from the hands of the autocracy into the hands of the liberal bourgeoisie. All that remained for the working class to do was to wring the greatest possible concessions from the liberal bourgeoisie, at the same time accepting their bourgeois government in principle. Such were the views of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks on the cardinal questions of the revolution during its early months, before the revolutionary wave reached its crest in the autumn of 1905.

The question was clear-cut: who was to hold power? Was the power to belong to the tsarist government, the liberal bour-

\* The Mensheviks were against joining such a government because they were opposed to a decisive triumph of the revolution. The Mensheviks concealed their opportunist attitude to this cardinal problem of the revolution by false and empty phrases regarding a socialist revolution in the West

geoisie, or to the proletariat and the peasantry? The policy Lenin laid down for the Party was directed towards the establishment of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. This dictatorship was to be achieved by a revolutionary struggle against the tsarist autocracy and by mercilessly exposing the liberal bourgeoisie, who in place of a republic were endeavouring to foist a constitutional monarchy on Russia, accompanied by every possible limitation of the rights of the working class.

The establishment of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry would bring Russia to a socialist revolution.

"The proletariat must carry out to the end the democratic revolution and in this unite to itself the mass of the peasantry, in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and to paralyse the instability of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution and in this unite to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population, in order to crush by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and to paralyse the instability of the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie." \*

### *A Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry*

The cardinal and basic task which the Bolsheviks at the end of 1905 set before the revolutionary masses was to achieve a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. In this the Bolsheviks based themselves on an analysis of the relation of forces existing in the country. Firstly there was the government, deriving support from the class of feudal landlords, whose endeavour was to maintain the old order. Secondly, there was the liberal bourgeoisie, which was not averse to taking power, but which feared the triumph of revolution more than it feared the preservation of the autocracy, and which accordingly made every endeavour to reach a compromise with the government. Thirdly, there was the force of the proletariat whose interest it was to carry the democratic revolution to its consummation, in order then to start the socialist revolution.

\* Lenin, "The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution." *Selected Works*, Vol. III

"You are not alone, peasants and workers of all Russia!" Lenin wrote in *Proletary* of October 25, 1905, in an article entitled "The First Victory of the Revolution" "If you succeed in overthrowing, finally defeating and destroying the tyrants of serf-owning, police-ridden, landlord and tsarist Russia, your victory will serve as a signal for a world struggle against the tyranny of capital, a struggle for the complete—not only political but also economic—emancipation of the toilers, a signal for a struggle for the deliverance of humanity from poverty, for the realisation of socialism" \*

The peasantry was interested in carrying the democratic revolution to completion because of its urgent need for land. An incomplete revolution, or a compromise of any kind with the old government could not satisfy the peasantry, for as long as the landlord class remained in power the peasants would not receive land—the landlords would not surrender it. The most that could be hoped for was that the landlords under pressure would surrender part of the land for payment. The peasants could secure the whole of the land without purchase only as a result of the complete triumph of a revolution effected under the hegemony of the proletariat. This circumstance made the peasantry the most reliable and faithful ally of the proletariat. That is why Lenin considered it the fundamental aim of the Party to achieve a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. The peasantry was to march together with the proletariat and help it overthrow the government and the landlords, despite the liberal bourgeoisie.

"When the people establishes its autocracy," Lenin declared at the Third Congress, "we must defend it—and that will be a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship . . . The whole question of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship has meaning only in the event of the complete overthrow of the autocracy. It is possible that there will be a repetition in our country of the events of 1848-50, *i e*, that the autocracy will not be overthrown, but only limited and transformed into a constitutional monarchy. In that case there can be no question of a democratic dictatorship. But if the autocratic government is really overthrown it must be replaced by another. And that other can be only a Provisional Revolutionary Government. It can derive its support only from the revolutionary people, *i e*, from the proletariat and the peasantry. It must necessarily be a dictatorship, *i e*, not an organisation for 'order,' but an organisation for war. Whoever storms a fortress cannot refuse to continue the war even when the fortress has been captured." \*\*

\* Lenin, *The Revolution of 1905*, Little Lenin Library.

\*\* Lenin, "The Third Congress of the RSDLP," *Collected Works*, Vol

Later, in his *Two Tactics*, Lenin gave a more detailed development and justification of the call for a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry:

"Great questions in the life of nations are settled only by force. The reactionary classes are usually themselves the first to resort to violence, to civil war, they are the first to 'place the bayonet on the agenda' as Russian autocracy did and is doing systematically, consistently, everywhere all over the country ever since January 9. And since such a situation has arisen, since the bayonet has really taken first place on the political agenda, since the uprising has become necessary and urgent—the constitutional illusions and school exercises in parliamentarism are becoming only a screen for the bourgeois betrayal of the revolution, a screen for the 'desertion' of the bourgeoisie from the cause of the revolution. The genuinely revolutionary class must then advance precisely the slogan of dictatorship." \*

The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry must on no account be understood as a parliamentary alliance, as a coalition between parties and, in particular, as a coalition between the Bolshevik and one or other peasant party. Later, in an article entitled *The Aim of the Struggle of the Proletariat in our Revolution*, written in 1909, Lenin, arguing against Martov and Trotsky, dwelt in detail on this subject and once more emphasised the character of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry as a coalition between revolutionary classes.

"A 'coalition' of classes by no means presumes the existence of a powerful party, or of parties in general. That is confusing the question of classes with the question of parties. The 'coalition' of the classes mentioned does by no means imply that one of the existing bourgeois parties gains control of the peasantry, or that the peasantry creates a powerful independent party [as Martov and Trotsky asserted—*N. P.*]. Theoretically this is clear from the fact that, first, the peasantry can only with the greatest difficulty lend itself to party organisation, and secondly the creation of peasant parties is a particularly difficult and protracted process during a bourgeois revolution. . . . From the experience of the Russian revolution [this was written in 1909—*N. P.*], it is also clear that the 'coalition' of the proletariat and the peasantry was effected *tens and hundreds of times* and in the most varied forms without 'a powerful independent party' of the peasantry, of any kind. This coalition was effected when there was 'common action,' for instance, of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies and the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies, or the railway workers' strike committee, or the peasants' deputies. These and similar organisations were for the most

\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. III

part *non-Party*, nevertheless a 'coalition' of *classes* undoubtedly took place in every case of common action between these organisations" \*

Lenin conceived the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry as a fighting alliance between those classes and as a revolutionary government based on force (like every dictatorship) and unconditionally led by the proletariat. This leadership, or hegemony, Lenin associated with the prospect of the revolution growing into a socialist revolution; it implied the transformation of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry into a socialist dictatorship of the proletariat.

*Views of Lenin and the Party on the Growth of the 1905  
Revolution into a Socialist Revolution*

The Mensheviks believed that the revolution taking place in the country was a bourgeois revolution, one which would place the bourgeoisie in power. Such was the classic formula of the Mensheviks. For the Party, on the other hand, the experience of the Revolution of 1905 served only to strengthen its theory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, one which is effected by the joint forces of the proletariat and the peasantry (under the leadership of the proletariat) with the purpose of establishing a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. The accomplishment of the bourgeois-democratic revolution led by the proletariat and the radical elimination of the political and economic survivals of the feudal system were to prepare the way for the immediate transformation of the revolution from a democratic into a socialist revolution. Lenin in 1905 already clearly perceived the necessity of this transformation.

We have proved this by a number of citations from Lenin's articles and speeches prior to, and during, the Third Congress. Having in mind the growth of the revolution into a socialist revolution, Lenin at the Third Congress spoke of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry as an organisation for war, and not for the establishment of order.

The theory of the growth of the bourgeois-democratic revolu-

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIV.

tion into a socialist revolution was developed with greater detail by Lenin in his *Two Tactics*, in which he showed that the establishment of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry would bring us face to face with the socialist revolution.

"The complete victory of the present revolution will mean the end of the democratic revolution and the beginning of a decisive struggle for a socialist revolution." \*

"Like everything else in the world, the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has a past and a future. Its past is autocracy, serfdom, monarchy and privileges . Its future is the struggle against private property, the struggle of the wage worker against his master, the struggle for socialism" \*\*

Lenin considered that the most important task of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry was "to set Europe ablaze" and not to wait until Europe itself began to blaze and the European proletariat having seized power, came to the aid of the Russian proletariat.

"Surely the possibility of retaining power in Russia must be determined by the composition of the social forces in Russia itself, by the circumstances of the democratic revolution which is now taking place in our country

"The victory of the proletariat in Europe (and there is a far cry between carrying the revolution into Europe and the victory of the proletariat) will give rise to a desperate counter-revolutionary struggle of the Russian bourgeoisie . . . We must issue practical slogans not only for the *contingency* of the revolution being carried into Europe, but also *for the purpose* of bringing this about" \*\*\*

The theory of the transformation of the revolution into a socialist revolution is formulated by Lenin with exceptional vividness in his article "The Attitude of Social-Democracy towards the Peasant Movement," which appeared in *Proletary*, September 1, 1905.

" . . . From the democratic revolution we shall at once—according to the degree of our strength, the strength of the class conscious organ-

\* "When not only the revolution but the complete victory of the revolution will have become a fact, we shall 'substitute' (perhaps amidst the terrible wailing of some future Martynovs) the slogan, the democratic dictatorship, by the slogan, the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., complete socialist revolution" (Lenin, "The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution" *Selected Works*, Vol. III)

\*\* *Ibid*

\*\*\* *Ibid*

used proletariat—begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for continuous revolution. We shall not stop halfway. Without indulging in any adventures or being false to our scientific conscience, without striving after cheap popularity, we can and do say *only one thing* we will with all our might help the entire peasantry to make the democratic revolution in order that it may be *easier* for us, the party of the proletariat, to pass on, as soon as possible, to a new and higher task—the socialist revolution.”\*

Here we have a clear, complete and definite point of view on the subject of the development of the Russian revolution from a bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution.

The Mensheviks averred that the material conditions did not exist in Russia for the development of the one revolution into the other. This was in effect a direct revision of the views of Marx and Engels, who from the experience of the revolution of 1848 came to the conclusion that the transformation into the socialist revolution was possible even in Germany, which at that time was at a considerably lower level of economic development than Russia was in 1905 (moreover, the latter had a workers’ party, which was not the case in Germany in the first half of the last century).

Furthermore, in 1905 Lenin regarded the revolution in Russia as one link in the struggle of the world proletariat in the new imperialist era.

“Formerly, the analysis of the premises of the proletarian revolution was usually approached from the point of view of the economic situation in any particular country. This method is now inadequate. Today, it must start from the point of view of the economic situation in all, or in a majority of, countries—from the point of view of the state of world economy, inasmuch as the individual countries and individual national economies are no longer self-contained economic units but have become links of a single chain called world economy, inasmuch as the old ‘cultured’ capitalism has grown into imperialism . . .

“Formerly, it was customary to talk of the existence or absence of objective conditions for the proletarian revolution in individual countries, or, to be more exact, in this or that advanced country. This point of view is now inadequate. Now we must say that objective conditions for the revolution exist throughout the whole system of imperialist world economy, which is an integral unit, the existence within this system of some countries that are not sufficiently developed from the industrial point of view cannot form an insurmountable obstacle to the

\* Lenin, “The Attitude of Social-Democracy towards the Peasant Movement,” *Collected Works*, Vol. VIII.



revolution, if the system as a whole has become, or more correctly *because* the system as a whole has already become ripe for the revolution.”

The fact that Russia existed side by side with more advanced capitalist countries was for the Mensheviks a conclusive argument that the socialist revolution must necessarily begin in those advanced countries. The Menshevik tactics that followed therefrom would have condemned the working class of Russia to passivity and assigned it to the service of the liberal bourgeoisie.

But Lenin regarded the matter entirely differently. For the very reason that Russia was the neighbour of advanced capitalist countries with a numerous, powerful and organised proletariat, the chances were all the greater that a democratic revolution begun in Russia, and growing into a socialist revolution with the help of its own internal forces, would meet with the support of the proletariat of Western Europe and lead to the triumph of socialism throughout the world.

Hence, Lenin's slogan was for an “immediate” transition from the democratic revolution to the socialist revolution, “within the measure of our strength—the strength of the class conscious and organised proletariat.” Lenin considered that the internal strength of the Russian revolution, led by the Bolshevik Party, was sufficient for such a transition.

Volume V of the *Lenin Miscellany* contains a document found among Lenin's papers entitled “The Stages, Trends and Prospects of the Revolution.” This document was written towards the end of 1905 and describes the course and prospects of the revolution as follows.

“1 The labour movement rouses the proletariat immediately under the leadership of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and awakens the liberal bourgeoisie. 1895 to 1901-1902

“2 The labour movement passes to open political struggle and carries with it the politically awakened strata of the liberal and radical bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. 1901-1902 to 1905

“3. The labour movement flares up into a direct *revolution*, while the liberal bourgeoisie has already united in a Constitutional-Democratic Party and thinks of stopping the revolution by compromising with tsarism; but the *radical* elements of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie are inclined to enter into an alliance with the proletariat for the *continuation of the revolution* 1905 (especially the end of that year).

\* Stalin, “Foundations of Leninism,” *Leninism*, Vol. I

"4 The labour movement is victorious in the *democratic* revolution, the liberals passively temporising and the *peasants* actively assisting. To this must be added the radical republican intelligentsia and the corresponding strata of the urban petty bourgeoisie. The uprising of the peasants is victorious, the power of the landlords is broken.

('The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.')

"5 The liberal bourgeoisie, temporising in the third period, passive in the fourth, becomes downright counter-revolutionary, and organises itself in order to filch from the proletariat the gains of the revolution. The whole of the well-to-do section of the peasantry and a large part of the middle peasantry also grow 'wiser,' quieten down and turn to the side of the counter-revolution, in order to wrest power from the proletariat and the rural poor, who sympathise with the proletariat.

"6 On the basis of the relations established during the fifth period, a new crisis and a new struggle blaze forth, the proletariat is now fighting to preserve its democratic gains for the sake of a socialist revolution. This struggle would be almost hopeless for the Russian proletariat alone and its defeat would be as inevitable as the defeat of the German revolutionary party in 1849-50 or as the defeat of the French proletariat in 1871, if the *European socialist proletariat* should not come to the assistance of the Russian proletariat.

"Thus at this stage, the liberal bourgeoisie and the well-to-do peasantry (and partly the middle peasantry) organise counter-revolution . . .

"Under such conditions the Russian proletariat can win a second victory. The cause is no longer hopeless. The second victory will be the *socialist revolution in Europe*."

What is most important and characteristic in this passage? Lenin conceives the triumphant revolution as the result of the labour movement and of a peasant uprising, and as the establishment of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (while the liberal bourgeoisie maintains a passive, waiting, i.e., a neutral, attitude).

In the following stage the liberal bourgeoisie and the wealthy peasantry adopt a counter-revolutionary position, while the proletariat and the poor peasantry are in power and defend the democratic conquests *for the sake of a socialist revolution*. This is wholly and completely in accord with the point of view expressed in the article *The Attitude of the Social-Democrats to the Peasant Movement*. Within the measure of the strength of the class conscious organised proletariat the transition is immediately effected to a socialist revolution. But there will be no stopping half way.

\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. III

This idea was developed by Lenin in still greater detail in his pamphlet *A Revision of the Agrarian Programme of the Workers' Party*, written at the very beginning of 1906.

"Unless the political system is completely democratised, unless there is a republic and the autocracy of the people is guaranteed in practice, there can be no question either of retaining the conquests of the peasant insurrection . . . *or of taking any step forward.* . . . [Our italics—N. P.] We must say to the peasant: Having taken the land you must go forward, otherwise you will most certainly be smashed and cast back by the landlords and the big bourgeoisie. You cannot take the land and retain it unless you achieve fresh political conquests and unless you deal another and still more decisive blow at the whole system of private property in land in general. In politics, as in social life generally, not to advance means to be thrown back. Either the bourgeoisie, strengthened after the democratic revolution (which will naturally strengthen the bourgeoisie), deprives both the worker and peasant masses of all their gains, or the proletariat and the peasant masses beat their path forward. And this means a republic and the complete autocracy of the people. It means after a republic has been won, the nationalisation of the whole land as the possible maximum of a bourgeois-democratic revolution and as a natural and essential step forward from the triumph of bourgeois democracy to the beginning of a real struggle for socialism." \*

Attempts have been made to mutilate Lenin's theory of the growth of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution and to argue that it is first necessary completely to abolish every survival of feudalism and then to wait until the poor peasant, having received his land, becomes thoroughly stewed in the juice of capitalism. Only then will he enlist in the struggle of the working class for socialism. The above quotation from Lenin clearly demonstrates what a monstrous distortion of Leninism is required in order to ascribe to Lenin the theory that a Chinese wall exists between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution.

From his pamphlet *To the Village Poor* and from other material, we learn that Lenin counted as village poor about two-thirds of the peasant households (six and a half millions out of ten millions). It was for this fundamental mass of the peasantry that Lenin organically associated the struggle against bourgeois counter-revolution and for the retention of the land with the

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. IX

transition of the revolution from the democratic phase to the socialist phase, and with the transformation of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry into a socialist dictatorship of the working class and the poor peasantry.

Either they must surrender the land they had conquered to the bourgeois-kulak counter-revolution, or they must march forward with the working class—that is the alternative Lenin as early as 1905 placed before the basic masses of the peasantry.

He considered that an alliance between the working class and the poor peasantry would be a sufficient guarantee not only for the complete victory of the democratic revolution, but also for the transition to a socialist revolution.

The Mensheviks considered that before the proletariat in Russia could win power, it was essential that power should be won by the proletariat of more advanced capitalist countries. In this they were fulfilling the social behest of the Russian bourgeoisie, for whom it was essential that the proletariat should be prevented from resorting to revolution.

Lenin speaks of the assistance to be offered by the European proletariat to the Russian proletariat *after*, and not *before*, the conquest of power, i.e., when that assistance is required for the purpose of retaining the conquered power and building up socialism.

Lenin had not the slightest doubt that the victory of the revolution in Russia would provoke the intervention of the bourgeois governments of Europe. The German government of Wilhelm II, in particular, adjacent to whose frontiers lay such revolutionary hotbeds as former Russian Poland and the Baltic provinces, was making preparations for sending troops into revolutionary Russia. A no less hostile attitude towards the Russian revolution was maintained by the ruling circles of republican France. The French bourgeoisie had placed vast sums into the bottomless pockets of the tsarist gang, in the form of loans. Its fear was twofold: a revolt of its own proletariat and the cancellation of debts as the result of a successful revolution in Russia.

In 1905, when the conflicting interests of the international imperialist groups had not yet developed to the pitch of open

warfare, the conditions for intervention against a revolutionary Russia would have been far more favourable than they were in 1917 and 1918, when vast imperialist forces were absorbed in a war of mutual destruction.

But even so, Lenin wrote that if the Russian proletariat took power and the European proletariat did not come to its aid the struggle would only be "almost" hopeless. There can be no doubt that Lenin had in mind such aid as would prevent or paralyse intervention.

Such aid was received by the Russian proletariat after the Revolution of October 1917, although it was not the *state* aid of which the Mensheviks and the Trotskyists spoke.

Lenin, while admitting the possibility of aid being received from a West European proletariat which had already accomplished a revolution, nowhere and never declared that this was an essential preliminary condition for the development of the Russian revolution into a socialist revolution.

The Russian proletariat was not to await such aid, but was to pass immediately from the democratic revolution to a socialist revolution. When Lenin speaks of a second victory, of the Russian proletariat creating a socialist revolution in conjunction with the West European proletariat, he is quite obviously referring not to the seizure of power, but to the final triumph of the socialist revolution. Lenin's plan, of course, differed entirely from that of Trotsky and from the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution, which Trotsky, following in the footsteps of Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg, developed in 1905.

Trotsky rejected the peasantry as an independent motive force in the Russian revolution and as the basic ally of the proletariat. This was rejecting the hegemony of the proletariat. Trotskyism denied the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Trotskyism, in fact, renounced preparation for and the conduct of armed insurrection, which was the only method of overthrowing tsarism. It closed the path to the conquest of power by the Russian working class. From the point of view of the relationship of forces within the country, the seizure of power became an absolutely impossible task. Trotsky wrote in his *Our Revolution*:

“Without the direct state support of the European proletariat, the working class cannot retain power in Russia and transform its temporary rule into a protracted socialist dictatorship ”

This was a lack of faith in the capacity of the Russian proletariat to lead first the whole mass of the peasantry to the democratic revolution, and then the poor peasantry to the socialist revolution. There was only one hope, viz., the aid of a European proletarian state. This hope united Trotskyism with the other shades of Menshevism, all of which in 1905 entertained defeatist-liquidationist views regarding the internal forces of the Russian revolution.

In what does Lenin's position in 1905 differ from his position in 1915-17? In the fact that Lenin in 1905 had not yet given a detailed analysis of the new imperialist phase of capitalism which had already set in, and in particular an analysis of the law of the uneven development of capitalism under imperialist conditions, on which he subsequently based the possibility of the triumph of socialism (in the sense of building a socialist society) in one country alone

As we know, Lenin made this analysis later, during the years of the imperialist war.

But even in 1905 (in fact, earlier) Lenin undoubtedly believed that the socialist revolution might begin in Russia, and that the Russian proletariat might be the first to seize power. It was on this, in fact, that Lenin based his policy, and it was for this that the Party fought under his leadership, aiming at the complete victory of the working class and the peasantry in the democratic revolution.

Lenin borrowed the idea of the growth of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution from Marx. This was the true and undistorted Marxian theory of permanent revolution. Lenin himself said: “We stand for uninterrupted revolution.” As Stalin says,

“The skilful hand of Lenin was needed . . . to bring out Marx's idea of uninterrupted revolution in its pure form and make it a cornerstone of his theory of the revolution. . . .

“The plan of our ‘permanentists’ *notwithstanding*, Marx did not at all propose to *begin* the revolution in the Germany of the 'fifties with the direct establishment of the proletarian power.

"Marx proposed the establishment of proletarian political power merely as the *crowning event* of the revolution, after hurling step by step one section of the bourgeoisie after another from its height of power, in order to ignite the torch of revolution in every country after the proletariat had come to power. Now this is *perfectly consistent* with all that Lenin taught, with all that he did in the course of our revolution in pursuit of his theory of the proletarian revolution in an imperialist environment" \*

### *The Revolutionary Movement after January 9*

January 9 was the starting point for a revolutionary movement of the working class masses of the country of unprecedented dimensions.

The political activities which followed the events of January 9 were most marked in the Baltic provinces and in Poland. In Central Russia and in the Ukraine the political and revolutionary activity displayed by the working class was at first not so great; there the events of January 9 served as a stimulus to a wave of economic strikes. Even during the period of crisis the revolutionary unrest of the masses drove them into the economic struggle, which, on the one hand, thanks to the prevailing revolutionary situation, produced comparatively easy results in the form of concessions to the demands of the workers, and, on the other, with equal ease developed into a political struggle.

From January and February 1905, a broad wave of economic strikes swept over the whole of Russia, affecting even the most out of the way places and becoming transformed into political strikes. It embraced practically the entire proletariat. The railway workers (strikes among the railway workers of Western Europe had until then been almost unknown) joined the vanguard of the strike movement; railway communication was halted for days, and even weeks. The most backward strata of the proletariat were drawn into the movement: there were mass strikes of carters, salesmen and domestic servants. Elements in capitalist society to whom it had previously never occurred to present even the slightest demands to their exploiters were now seized with the desire to better their material and living conditions.

Parallel with the growth of the political and economic strike movement in the cities, a wave of agrarian "riots" swept over the countryside. The agrarian movement assumed particularly extensive proportions in the Baltic region and in Georgia, notably

\* Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism," *Leninism*, Vol. I

in Guria, where it developed into a mass movement, actively guided by the Bolsheviks, and led to the virtual deposition of the local tsarist authorities and the assumption of their functions by bodies elected by the peasantry

Under the pressure of the strikes and the widespread agrarian movement, the tsarist government was forced to issue a decree appointing an extraordinary commission under the chairmanship of the Minister of Home Affairs, Bulygin, to discuss the question of inviting the participation of persons "enjoying the confidence of the people" in the consideration of legislative acts. The pressure of revolutionary events forced the tsarist government to make this "hint" at a constitution, to which formerly it had turned a deaf ear.

In the summer of 1905, after a fresh series of severe defeats on the war front, there began a new wave of strikes which tended to assume the form of open insurrection. A vast economic strike broke out at Ivanovo-Voznesensk which lasted seventy-two days. A new body arose as the guiding organ of the general strike—the Soviet of Workers' Deputies from the factories, the first soviet in the country.

Almost simultaneously with the strike in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, a strike broke out in another large textile centre—Lodz. This strike assumed a definitely political character: barricade warfare in the streets of Lodz lasted for several days.

Not long before this a general strike broke out in Odessa, with which the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin* coincided. This was the first large-scale mutiny in the tsarist forces since the Decembrists; but it was an isolated mutiny, lacking firm leadership, and therefore doomed to failure. It showed, however, that the knife of revolution was nearing the very heart of the tsarist regime. The armed forces, the main bulwark of the power of the tsarist government, were becoming unreliable.

### *Boycott of the Bulygin Duma*

The powerful upsurge of the revolutionary movement in the country compelled the tsarist government in February of that year to promise the convocation of a representative assembly. The tsarist government hoped in this way to pacify the opposition



elements of the possessing classes and to deceive the not very enlightened section of the masses, in order the easier to settle accounts with the revolutionary movement.

Events in Lodz, in Ivanovo-Voznesensk and Odessa, and particularly the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin*, compelled the tsarist government to hasten the promulgation of the statutes of a state Duma. The statutes were issued on August 6, 1905. These statutes provided for the creation of a Duma enjoying only consultative functions and deprived of all legislative powers. It was empowered to consider only such legislation as the tsarist government might deem fit to submit to its consideration; its decisions were not obligatory on the tsar. Yet despite the insignificant powers granted to the Duma, the tsarist government took every precaution to prevent "unreliable elements" gaining membership thereto. The suffrage was constructed on a *curia* system, which guaranteed the predominance of the rich landlords and merchants over the peasants. The latter, moreover, were to exercise their vote under the surveillance of the country prefects, who belonged to the landed nobility. The intention was that the votes of the merchants and nobles should completely counteract the peasant electors in such cases where the country prefects failed in securing the selection of electors from among the reactionary kulaks. Great hopes were laid on the country prefects and on the conservative instincts of the peasants. Certain of the initiators of the Bulygin electoral law even hoped to make the peasants serve as a counterpoise to the liberal landlord elements (the Zemstvo Constitutionalists).

The working class received no election rights whatsoever. The system of election to the Bulygin Duma was worthy of the wretched rights entrusted to the latter. But the Bulygin Duma was fated to exist only on paper. It was swept aside by the rising tide of revolution.

The latter half of the summer of 1905 passed more tranquilly than the first half, in the sense that there were no outstanding manifestations of the revolutionary movement similar to the mutiny on the *Potemkin* and the events in Lodz. But, on the other hand, intensive and systematic political and organisational work was carried on by the Bolshevik Party. These activities were favoured by the fact that it was summer, which permitted assemblies and mass meetings to be held outside of the city. The

police system was disorganised. A sort of semi-liberty was arbitrarily instituted, and this permitted the Bolsheviks to strengthen their ideological influence and their organisation.

Acute differences of opinion again arose between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks over the question of the Bulygin Duma. The Bolsheviks, perceiving the rising tide of the revolutionary movement, and realising that the law for the summoning of a Duma was but a shred of paper, were of the opinion that the Duma must be removed from the path of revolution and the elections to the Duma boycotted. The election system indeed was such as entirely to exclude the working class (on whose votes alone the Party could count) from participation in the elections. A Party which was debarred from the elections by the very system of voting could pursue no other tactics but boycott.\*

In spite of this, the Mensheviks declared in favour of participating in the elections. This was the record for opportunism. Not only the workers, but even the petty bourgeoisie of the cities who did not possess real estate were debarred from the elections. The Mensheviks, however, calculated that the bourgeoisie would select "Left" electors who would be able to set up revolutionary local government bodies. The Mensheviks advanced the slogan of revolutionary local government bodies in opposition to the slogan of a Provisional Revolutionary Government. For the Mensheviks organs of revolutionary local government meant the elected organs of the bourgeoisie possessing the property qualifications. That is what the Mensheviks understood by revolution.

We thus find the Mensheviks once again endeavouring to reduce the role of the workers to mere support of the liberal bourgeoisie, this time in the "revolutionary local government bodies," which the bourgeoisie were to create on the basis of the Bulygin electoral system.

\* A resolution to boycott the Bulygin Duma was adopted in September 1905 by a conference of Social-Democratic organisations, in which participated, in addition to the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks the Bund, the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, the Social-Democratic Party of Latvia and the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party (the R.U.P.), which that year changed its name to the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Party. The Mensheviks were alone in their opposition to the resolution.

The opportunism and treachery of the Menshevik tactics became obvious to all.

But the Bulygin Duma was swept aside by the rising tide of the revolutionary mass movement, which reached its culmination in the October general strike.

### *The October Strike—Soviets of Workers' Deputies*

The strike began on the railroads in Moscow, whence it spread to the whole railroad system of the country. Transport and large-scale industry were brought to a standstill. The strike affected even the most backward sections of the working class. Educational institutions were closed down. In certain cities, Moscow, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav and Odessa, for instance, the strike was accompanied by street fighting, barricades were erected and there were killed and wounded in the fighting.

The whole life of the country was brought to a standstill. The tsarist government was forced to issue the Manifesto of October 17, promising the population civil liberties, and an extension of the rights of the state Duma and of the electoral law.

The important thing, of course, was not the Manifesto itself, which was but a manoeuvre. The important thing was the relation of forces which existed at the time the Manifesto was proclaimed. The working class movement had achieved very wide scope and enjoyed the more or less passive sympathy of the intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie. The machinery of government and the forces supporting reaction were profoundly disorganised. The swiftly rising tide of revolution, carrying vast masses into its sweep, laid on the working class and its leader, the Bolshevik Party, the task of creating organisations to serve as the direct leaders of the militant organisations of the revolutionary masses. This function fell to the lot of the *Soviets of Workers' Deputies*, which Lenin characterised as the embryonic organs of revolutionary power. These organisations were formed as the result of the creative revolutionary energy of the proletarian masses, who had risen to revolt under the leadership of the Party.

The first Soviet of Workers' Deputies was formed in St. Petersburg several days prior to the promulgation of the Mani-

festos of October 17, and functioned openly. It assumed the leadership of the strike. The tsarist government did not dare to molest it. The Soviet assembled freely, published its own paper, which it produced in printshops seized from the bourgeois newspapers, and rallied around itself the revolutionary forces of the working class.

The October strike was the first stimulus for the formation of Soviets of Workers' Deputies, which became the leading organs of the revolutionary struggle of the working class and were the embryonic organs of revolutionary power. The St. Petersburg Soviet was followed in November by the formation of Soviets of Workers' Deputies in Moscow, Rostov-on-Don, Nikolayev, Kiev, Odessa, Kostroma, Ekaterinoslav, Byelostok, Baku, Saratov, Samara and Novorossusk.\* The forces of revolution were, however, still too feeble and were unable to overthrow the tsarist government; the latter soon began to mobilise its own forces.

Shortly after the issue of the Manifesto of October 17, a wave of Jewish pogroms, organised by the Black Hundreds, swept over Russia. The number of massacred amounted to thousands. Pogroms were also organised against the intellectuals, students and advanced workers.\*\* Not only the police and the troops were active in these pogroms, but also considerable sections of the petty bourgeoisie of the towns—artisans, traders, etc.

The demagogic, anti-Semitic slogans, which helped to mobilise the forces of reaction, enabled the government to deal a severe blow at the revolution. The government took advantage of the fact that Jewish intellectuals and workers were very active in the revolutionary movement in order to create the belief among the backward and unenlightened elements of the petty bourgeoisie that the revolution was entirely the work of the Jews. Age-old national and religious prejudices, inflamed by the Black Hundreds organisations, enabled the government to

\* Certain Bolsheviks, particularly in St. Petersburg (Bogdanov, for instance) failed at first to grasp the full importance of the revolutionary role of the Soviets as transmission belts from the Party to the masses, and were inclined to look upon them as competitors of the Party.

\*\* In Moscow one of the leaders of the Party organisation, and a participant in the Second Congress, N. Baumann, was slain by the Black Hundreds, while Fedor Aphanasiev, an old member of the circles of the early 'nineties, perished in Ivanovo-Voznesensk.

institute a ghastly massacre. The social discontent of the petty bourgeois masses was skilfully directed towards Jewish pogroms. The wave of pogroms swept over the country and to a considerable extent paralysed the revolutionary movement. This heartened the government and enabled it to consolidate its position and once more assume the offensive.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, in spite of the warnings of the Party, certain sections of the workers and city petty bourgeoisie took the Manifesto at its face value. The resulting state of mind led to the spontaneous cessation of the October strike. The spurious manifesto did its work and enabled the government to gain time.

Nevertheless, the October strike, and the few days of freedom it brought with it, was a considerable help to the Party and enabled it to spread its ideological influence and strengthen its organisation.

### *Revolution and Reaction Mobilise Forces*

The brief period that now supervened is known in the history of the Russian revolution as "the days of freedom." It lasted roughly from the end of October to the early part of December and was characterised by a twofold process—the mobilisation of the forces of revolution and the mobilisation of the forces of reaction.

In what did the mobilisation of the forces of revolution consist? Primarily, in the creation of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies. Simultaneously, intensive activity was displayed in the organisation of trade unions. While the Party organisations themselves remained underground, a large part of their agitational and propagandist work was brought into the open. The organisations themselves gained considerably in numbers and strength: the legal Party press flourished. Bolshevik papers were published not merely in the capitals (St. Petersburg and

\* Many years later, during the second revolution, the hordes of counter-revolution frequently endeavoured, not without success, to mobilise the backward elements of the population by means of anti-Semitic slogans. It is a method which has not been abandoned to this day.

Moscow), but also in a number of provincial cities.<sup>1</sup> Members of the petty bourgeoisie of the cities began to come over to the side of the proletariat, while the ranks of the Black Hundred organisations among the lower strata of the city population began to thin.

Through the numerous channels that connect the city with the countryside, the working class with the peasantry, the revolutionary movement of the towns began to spread to the rural districts. A well attended Congress of the Peasants' Union was held. During the month of November and the early part of December one hundred and sixty country districts were scenes of spontaneous agrarian "disorders." All over the country estates were raided and sacked.

The revolutionary ferment spread to the peasants and thence to the armed forces which consisted for the main part of peasants. Several days after the issue of the Manifesto of October 17, "disorders" broke out in Kronstadt, but owing to the absence of strong revolutionary organisations among the sailors, the movement assumed the form of a disorganised mutiny, which the government managed to suppress.

But hardly had the government settled the revolt in Kronstadt when a new outbreak occurred among the sailors, this time in Sebastopol. The leader of the mutiny was Lieutenant Schmidt. Owing to the vacillations and blunders of Schmidt and the Sebastopol Mensheviks who aided him, the government quickly managed to restore "order."

After the revolt in Sebastopol a number of demonstrations occurred in the garrisons of other cities (Kiev, Kharkov and Moscow). The work carried on by the Bolsheviks in the army made its influence felt.

Thus, we find the revolution mobilising its forces along the whole line, as witnessed by the growth of workers' organisations,

\* The circulation of the central Bolshevik organ *Novaya Zhizn* published in St Petersburg attained 50,000 copies. The publication of Party books and pamphlets reached large proportions towards the end of 1905. At that time practically every West-European Social-Democratic work (Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Bebel, W. Liebknecht, Lassalle, Guesde, Lafargue, etc) was published in the Russian language. At the same time there appeared a number of original books and pamphlets, among them many of the works of Lenin. This vast amount of literature, appearing as it did legally, was a tremendous influence in the spread of Marxist ideas among the workers and the revolutionary intelligentsia.

particularly of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies and the trade unions, and the growing influence of the Party. The influence of the working class spread to the country and to the army.

But simultaneously, reaction was also mobilising its forces. The government rallied the support of the propertied classes, particularly the landlords and the extreme reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie. The liberal bourgeoisie also began to turn towards the government, although prior to the Manifesto of October 17 its attitude was one of hostile neutrality, inspired by the expectation that the revolution would place the government into its hands. When, however, the liberal bourgeoisie realised whither the revolution was leading, when they saw that the influence of the Bolshevik Party was rapidly growing and that the revolution was proceeding under the hegemony of the proletariat, when they also saw the military and agrarian "disorders," the majority of them began to beat a decided retreat. And it must be remembered that the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie on a large part of the intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie of the cities was still considerable. The government began to gain confidence and to feel that it was not only capable of defence, but also of counter-attack.

But the most important factor was that the revolutionary process among the peasantry had not gone far enough. This enabled the government to retain its control over the great majority of the armed forces.

The insufficient activity displayed by the peasantry became the decisive factor in the struggle between the working class and the government. The result was that the army as a whole remained in the hands of the government.

Very little was done by the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, including that of St. Petersburg, in the way of technical preparations for an armed uprising. Instead of arming the masses, or even creating fighting squads, the Soviets frequently confined themselves to inadequate attempts at organising defensive measures against the pogroms. That was the effect of the demoralising influence of the Mensheviks and their policy of frustrating armed insurrection.

The strike declared in November by the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies in protest against the committal of the Kronstadt sailors to court martial and the placing of Poland

under martial law did not spread beyond the confines of St. Petersburg and ended in failure. A protest strike alone which did not develop into armed revolt, was of course incapable of overthrowing the autocracy. That was the reason Lenin declared against the November strike.

Failure also attended the attempt by the workers arbitrarily to introduce an eight-hour day in the mills and factories of St. Petersburg, to which the factory owners, with the support of the government, countered by declaring a general lock-out.

In the beginning of December 1905, an appeal was issued by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the central committees of the revolutionary parties calling upon the population to withdraw their deposits from the savings banks, to accept wages only in metal coin and to demand that the banks exchange currency notes for gold. The government did not stand idle. Eight of the newspapers of St. Petersburg which had printed the appeal including the Bolshevik *Novaya Zhizn*, were closed down. The following day, December 3, 1905, the entire Executive Committee of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies was arrested\*. True, the Soviet continued to exist and a new Executive Committee was elected, but it was apparent that the days of freedom had come to a close.

### *The December Armed Insurrection*

The Executive Committee of the St Petersburg Soviet was arrested on December 3, while it was discussing the question of a new general strike. The arrest delayed the declaration of the strike for several days. It began on December 7 and 8 upon the call of the revolutionary organisations. It must be stated that by that time the proletariat of St. Petersburg was extremely exhausted, with the result that in St. Petersburg the December strike was far less solid and organised than the strikes of October and November\*\*. Not more than 90,000 workers took part in the December strike, as compared with 200,000 in

\* In the autumn of 1906, after nearly a year's imprisonment, the members of the Executive Committee were condemned to lifelong exile.

\*\* One, very important, cause was that the new Executive Committee of the Soviet, consisting mainly of Mensheviks headed by Parvus, conducted itself in a most irresolute manner and displayed not the slightest initiative or ability in leading the movement.



October and November. But more important was the fact that the strike failed to spread to the railroads of St. Petersburg.

Moscow was the centre of the strike, which was planned to develop into an armed insurrection. Here it was conducted in an organised manner and almost directly assumed the form of barricade warfare waged by organised revolutionary fighting squads against government troops. The number of fully organised and armed men participating in the barricade fighting was inconsiderable; it did not exceed 1,500. The mass of striking workers, who were unarmed, found it difficult to take an active part in the revolt, apart from the erection of barricades, and so forth. The influence of the Menshevik tactics of "spontaneity" was fatal. On the other hand, practically the whole of the Moscow garrison was seriously infected by the revolutionary ferment and was kept confined to barracks; only a section of the artillery, the Cossacks and the dragoons, were actively engaged against the fighting squads. But the superiority passed into the hands of the government when fresh military reinforcements were brought from St. Petersburg. With their aid the centre of the city was cleared, the barricade fighters were driven into the suburb of Pressnya and closely surrounded, and within a few days the insurrection was suppressed. The revolutionaries "removed themselves beyond the limits of accessibility," as the dry-land admiral, Dubasov, who quelled the uprising, described it. The strike and insurrection affected a number of other industrial centres. Bitter barricade fighting lasted several days in Rostov, while attempts at revolt were made in several places in the Donets Basin, Ekaterinoslav, Nikolayev, Novorossiisk, Kharkov, and other centres. But everywhere the government managed to quell the uprising with the aid of the troops. Only in the Baltic provinces, in a part of Georgia (Guria) and in Siberia along the line of the railroad, was the power wrenched from the hands of the government for a brief period of ten to fifteen days and passed into the hands of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies and Peasant and Agricultural Workers' Committees created by the revolutionary masses under the leadership of the Party. In certain places in Siberia (Krasnoyarsk, Kansk and Chita), where the troops joined the insurgent workers, Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies were formed.

The main reason for the collapse of the December insurrec-

tion was that the strength of the working class was inadequate although it displayed marvels of heroism. A less active part in the movement was now taken by the St Petersburg proletariat, which was the most advanced section of the proletariat. The upper and middle bourgeoisie went over to the side of the government, while the Bolshevik Party, which led the movement, had not sufficient organisational contacts with the peasants and the army, whose fight was not adequately co-ordinated with the fight of the urban proletariat. Technical preparations for the insurrection were frustrated by the Mensheviks, who verbally declared themselves in favour of insurrection, but in practice actively opposed it. Because of all these factors, the December insurrection, which was the culminating point of the revolutionary movement of 1905, and which revealed the future forms which would be taken by the struggle, suffered defeat. After the insurrection was crushed a new phase set in, a phase in which the forces of reaction gradually, but ever more definitely and obviously, secured sway over the country.

#### *Opportunism Masked by Revolutionary Phrases*

When the statutes of the Bulygin Duma were announced, the Bolsheviks proposed that the Duma should be boycotted. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, who at their Conference adopted a special resolution on the subject of elections to representative institutions, hoped that the liberal bourgeoisie would gain a majority in the Bulygin Duma, bad as its constitution was. The Duma might then transform itself into a representative institution which would assume the initiative of summoning a Constituent Assembly.

This point of view ascribed to the liberal bourgeoisie qualities as a motive force of the revolution which it did not possess. And since the Mensheviks called upon the proletariat to act in conjunction with the bourgeoisie, the result was an adaptation to the liberal bourgeoisie and its betrayal of the revolution.

Naturally, the Mensheviks did not propose in so many words that the working class should follow the lead of the liberal bourgeoisie. Such a confession of open treachery would not have

helped them win the working class. Yet the influence of the Mensheviks over the workers in 1905 was stronger than during the Revolution of 1917. The influence of the Mensheviks over certain sections of the working class is explained by the fact that they presented their policy of subordinating the proletariat to the liberal bourgeoisie in the guise of an independent class policy of the proletariat.

This so-called independence was emphasised by the Mensheviks on every possible occasion. They violently accused the Bolsheviks of wanting like the S.R.'s to fuse the proletariat with the peasantry, to sacrifice the interests of the proletariat to the interests of the peasantry and resurrect the traditions of the Narodniki and the Narodnaya Volya. The Mensheviks accused the Bolsheviks of a "peasant deviation," the same accusation as was subsequently levelled by Shlyapnikov's Workers' Opposition.

Menshevik literature at that period was full of the most violent attacks upon the Bolsheviks, who were accused of deserting the proletariat for the democratic-revolutionary point of view. Many of the oppositionists of various groups who attacked the Party for its tactics in the years 1918 to 1928 and levelled similar accusations against it did not realise that they were repeating an old song of the Mensheviks.

The Mensheviks declared: we are for an independent class policy of the proletariat; we are against a permanent political *bloc* with the peasantry; the peasantry is a semi-reactionary force, since the perpetuation of small landed proprietorship, which the peasantry is aiming for, is incompatible with the rapid development of capitalism; to form a close coalition with the peasantry would mean sacrificing the interests of the proletariat and its class independence; the liberal bourgeoisie, on the other hand, is interested in the further development of capitalism. Consequently, the Mensheviks recommended that the liberal bourgeoisie should be supported.

The effect was that the Mensheviks diverted the attention of the working class from its only true ally. Under the pretext of defending an independent policy of the proletariat, *i.e.*, independent of the peasantry, they placed both the working class and the peasantry at the service of the liberal bourgeoisie.

*Trotskyism, a Variant of Menshevism*

Menshevism during the Revolution of 1905, as at subsequent periods, was not a homogeneous and undivided whole. Within Menshevism there were always various currents. Such was the case in 1905. From the very beginning of the revolution certain of the Mensheviks declared themselves opposed to the official attitude of their faction towards the liberal bourgeoisie. At the beginning of 1905, articles appeared in *Iskra*, first by Parvus and then by Trotsky, in which an independent position was set forth. Parvus and Trotsky did not agree with the Mensheviks in their estimate of the liberal bourgeoisie.

However, Trotsky continued to share the attitude of the Mensheviks towards the peasantry. Both Parvus and Trotsky considered, as the Mensheviks did, that the peasantry could not play any significant part in the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and that after that revolution had been effected the peasantry would become a completely reactionary force.

The Mensheviks considered that the working class must assist the bourgeoisie in achieving power. Parvus and Trotsky asserted that the liberal bourgeoisie must be disregarded. What remained? Only the proletariat: the proletariat would have to bear the main burden of the bourgeois revolution.

The Parvus and Trotsky current at first enjoyed very little influence within the Menshevik faction. It left practically no mark on the resolution adopted by the Menshevik conference which proceeded simultaneously with the Third Bolshevik Congress. But after the October strike, when the revolutionary working class movement had aroused the whole country, and when the role of the working class had become evident to all, we observe a "revaluation of values" among the Mensheviks. The Trotsky and Parvus position began to gain strength, while the official position declined.

Martov in his book *The History of the R S D. L. P.* devoted a whole chapter to describing how, under the influence of the revolutionary movement of October and November 1905, official Menshevism almost came to adopt the point of view of Trotsky and Parvus to the effect that the Russian revolution would lead to the establishment of a purely workers' government.

The fact that at the end of 1905 orthodox Menshevism ap-

pears to have been swallowed by Trotskyism is characteristic of that period.

The official organ of the Mensheviks *Nachalo*, together with Trotsky's own paper, *Russkaya Gazeta*, supported Trotsky's point of view. An editorial in the first number of *Nachalo*, written by Parvus, declared that the aim of the revolution was a "workers' democracy" (and not the transfer of power to the bourgeoisie). A leading article in No. 7 stated that it was not unlikely that the social crisis would assume so protracted a character that the bourgeois revolution would become directly transformed into a socialist revolution. An article by Trotsky in No. 10 refers to uninterrupted revolution as the principle upon which socialist tactics were based.

*Nachalo*, like Trotsky, based the theory of the seizure of power by the proletariat upon the inability of the bourgeoisie to co-operate with the proletariat. In No. 3 of *Nachalo*, E. Smirnov, an extremely Right Menshevik, directly declared that the liberals had betrayed the people sooner than might have been expected. Liberalism is regarded as an objectively counter-revolutionary force, playing no other part than as an ally of the bureaucracy and the nobility. In No. 8 of *Nachalo* an editorial bluntly declared: "The revolution has passed through its first phase. The Zemstvo opposition has split away and become a counter-revolutionary force."

Thus, we see Menshevism at the end of 1905 assuming the protective colouring of Trotskyism. Menshevism had led the working class from the opportunist utopia of an alliance with bourgeois liberalism to an opportunist theory—the independent seizure of power by the working class, thus turning its back on the peasantry.

On the other hand, the Bolshevik paper, *Novaya Zhizn* which existed at the same time as the *Nachalo*, in number after number, emphasised the necessity for the working class gaining control of, and leading, the peasant revolutionary movement, which it regarded as an essential condition for the triumph of the revolution. *Novaya Zhizn* attached the greatest significance to the peasant question and to the agrarian relations. Very characteristic is the comment made by Martov in his *History* to the effect that the greatest "peasantophilism" was manifested by Lenin.

Since the Mensheviks now inclined to the opinion that the

proletariat would prove capable in the revolution of achieving a decisive victory alone both against the government and against the liberal bourgeoisie, without the aid of the peasantry, the result was to lead them to revise their attitude towards participation in a Provisional Government.

But the defeat of the Revolution of 1905 was due to the very fact that the peasant masses were not sufficiently active.\* This circumstance clearly demonstrates the opportunist utopianism of Trotsky's point of view, although, for a time, it is true, it dazzled such "realistic politicians" as Martov and Dan. It diverted the working class from a most essential task, namely, to secure the closest contact with the peasantry and to gain control and leadership over the peasant movement. It sowed dangerous illusions among the working class masses. For all its apparent revolutionariness, for all its apparent Leftism, this point of view played into the hands of the bourgeoisie. By neglecting to associate itself with the revolutionary peasantry, the proletariat condemned itself to inevitable defeat. The harmfulness for the proletariat of the theory of a "purely workers' revolution" and its objective advantage to the bourgeoisie, explains why it gained the support of the Menshevik leaders, who were conveyors of bourgeois influence to the proletariat.

### *The Bolshevik Party at the End of 1905*

Such were the essentially different positions held by the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. At the end of 1905 the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks constituted in fact two separate parties. But the upsurge of the revolution and the pressure exerted by the masses forced the Mensheviks towards the Left, compelled them to manoeuvre and change their weapons in order not to be left behind by the masses. The Mensheviks were obliged for a time to pocket their tactics of supporting the liberal bourgeoisie. With the change of political conditions certain of the former differences on questions of organisation (as, for instance, over the

\* It should, however, be emphasised that greater activity in the struggle against the landlords and the tsarist government was displayed by the poor and middle peasants than by the kulaks, although certain historians at one time endeavoured to maintain the contrary.

degree of application of the elective principle and of broad democracy in general) became less acute.

Lenin wrote an article entitled "The Reorganisation of the Party" in the legally published Bolshevik paper *Novaya Zhizn* on this state of affairs, in which he said:

"The conditions of activity of our Party are undergoing a radical change. Freedom of assembly, of association and of the press has been seized. Of course, these rights are extremely transient, and it would be folly, if not a crime, to rely on the present liberties. . . . The secret apparatus of the Party must be preserved. But at the same time it is absolutely necessary to take the widest possible advantage of the present relatively wide scope of liberties that we enjoy. In addition to the secret apparatus it is absolutely necessary to create many new, public and semi-public Party organisations (and organisations affiliated with the Party). . . . We, the representatives of revolutionary Social-Democracy, and supporters of the 'Majority,' have repeatedly stated that the complete democratisation of the Party was impossible under conditions of secret work and that under such conditions the 'elective principle' was a mere phrase. And life has confirmed our statements. . . . But we Bolsheviks have always admitted that when conditions changed . . . it would be necessary to adopt the elective principle." \*

Of course the fundamental difference on organisational questions remained. The Bolsheviks continued to insist on the necessity for a strictly constituted Party organisation as the vanguard of the working class. The Mensheviks, including the Trotskyists, continued to manifest the tendency to efface the boundary line between Party and class; they continued to speak of admitting the whole proletariat into the Party, of creating a Party organisation on the basis of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, and so forth.

While completely retaining its non-Bolshevik attitude towards the peasant question, on a number of other questions, Menshevism (of which the dominating variant for a brief period became Trotskyism) manoeuvred and changed its weapons, and was compelled, at least formally, to come closer to the Bolshevik position. The question of union arose. The Bolsheviks were ready to consent to union in the expectation that as regards both tactical and organisational questions the Mensheviks would be forced by revolutionary events to make a number of important conces-

\* Lenin, "The Reorganisation of the Party," *Selected Works*, Vol. III.

sions. The Menshevik workers exerted a definite influence over their leaders.

Lenin regarded organisational union with the Mensheviks as one method of winning over the Menshevik workers to Bolshevism. But for that very reason the Mensheviks impeded and opposed union in every possible way, fearing the Bolshevik sympathies of their working class members and the possibility that they themselves would be left as an insignificant minority within the Party, and therefore be compelled either to capitulate or face extinction. The fact that Bolshevism at the Third Congress constituted itself as an independent political current, as an independent party (as a matter of fact, Bolshevism had been an independent party since the Second Congress), was regarded by Lenin as a pledge that the Bolshevik tactics would become the basis for a united party.

It should be observed that during the entire period of the Third Congress Lenin combated the conciliationist tendencies within the Central Committee (Bogdanov, Krassin, etc.) which endeavoured to gloss over the political differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.

When the *Novaya Zhizn* and the *Nachalo* were closed down for printing the appeal of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, one single newspaper was issued in St. Petersburg in their place, the *Severny Golos* (*Voice of the North*), which served as the joint organ of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. What was known as federal committees, consisting of representatives of both organisations, but with the Bolshevik influence predominant, were formed in practically every city. The Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks each had their own representatives on the Executive Committee of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies.\* In the early part of December a conference of Bolshevik

\* Lenin subsequently referred as follows to the manoeuvres in the direction of Bolshevism which the Mensheviks were obliged to undertake at that period.

"The rising tide of revolution drove the differences into the background, it compelled the recognition of fighting tactics; it brushed aside the question of the Duma; it placed the question of insurrection on the order of the day and led to a rapprochement between the Social-Democrats and the revolutionary-bourgeois democrats for the accomplishment of the immediate tasks on hand. In the *Severny Golos* the Mensheviks jointly with the Bolsheviks called for a strike and insurrection and appealed to the workers not to cease the fight until they had won power. The revolutionary situation itself



organisations was held at Tammerfors in Finland. This must be regarded as the First Conference of the Bolshevik Party. The Conference declared in favour of union with the Mensheviks and the immediate creation of a united Central Committee. In view of the fact that the conditions of existence of the Party had sharply changed and that during the days of freedom tens of thousands of workers had joined the ranks of the Party, the Conference decided to apply the elective principle fairly widely within the Party. Under the pressure of the working class rank and file, a resolution in favour of union was also adopted by the Mensheviks at their own conference, which took place almost at the same time as the Tammerfors Conference. They also voted in favour of a number of amendments to the Party statutes couched in democratic terms. They were obliged to discard their original text of the first clause of the Party statutes and to adopt the Bolshevik text, according to which only those definitely belonging to one or other Party organisation could be regarded as Party members.\*

The Tammerfors Bolshevik Conference adopted a resolution declaring the necessity for a new agrarian programme in which the seizure of the landlords' estates by the peasants would be advocated. It was decided to proceed immediately to formal union and to the creation of a Central Committee on the basis of equal representation.<sup>1,2</sup>

The joint Central Committee began to function at the very height of the December insurrection. Upon its defeat the Central

inspired practical slogans. Differences of opinion concerned only details in the estimate of events: for instance, *Nachalo* regarded the Soviets of Workers' Deputies as organs of revolutionary local government, while the *Novaya Zhizn* regarded them as embryonic organs of revolutionary power . . . *Nachalo* inclined to a dictatorship of the proletariat, *Novaya Zhizn* favoured a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" (Lenin, "The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party," *Collected Works*, Vol. IX.)

\* An active participant in the Tammerfors Conference was Stalin, who at that time was already a prominent political worker and one of the leaders of the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus.

\*\* The Bolsheviks were represented on the Joint Central Committee by Krassin, Lalayantz and Sammer (later also by Rykov and Rumyantsev); the Mensheviks were represented by Krokmal, Tarasevich and Yordansky. The Bolsheviks delegated to the joint Editorial Board of the central organ: Lunacharsky (Voynov), Bazarov (who subsequently left the Party) and Vorovsky (Orlovsky), while the Mensheviks delegated Dan, Martynov and Martov.

Committee proceeded to the task of summoning a joint congress. Since the Party had begun to function semi-openly, it was decided that the delegates should be elected by the democratic method, i.e., not by committees, but by the rank and file directly.

The Party was faced with new problems by the December defeat. But at the same time it caused a definite swing to the Right on the part of the Mensheviks, who, as reaction recorded victory after victory, began to drop the revolutionary phraseology they had affected during the October period.

The Bolsheviks on the eve of the 1905 Revolution had already created a nation-wide and centralised organisation (its activities, however, spread hardly or not at all to Poland, Lithuania, Finland and Latvia, in Lithuania and White Russia, and partly in the Ukraine large numbers of the proletariat of the cities and small towns supported the Bund). But even in such centres as St. Petersburg the influence of the Party organisation over the proletarian masses was still far from adequate: on January 9 the workers of St. Petersburg followed Gapon. By the end of 1905 the influence of the Party over the proletariat and its organisational contacts with the masses had grown tremendously. The broad workers' organisations—first and foremost the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, which as Lenin aptly phrased it were already then the embryonic organs of revolutionary power—played an important part as transmission belts between the Party and the proletarian masses. At the end of 1905 the Party had led the working class in a general strike and an armed insurrection. Its failure to achieve victory over tsarism was due not to lack of support of the working class, but to the fact that the revolutionary fight of the workers was not supported by the peasants and the army (which also consisted of peasants). That is why the question of the tactics of the Party towards the peasantry was of such essential significance.

Those who failed to understand this, and who recommended the liberal bourgeoisie as an ally of the working class instead of the peasantry, or who advised the working class to forego allies entirely, were simply driving the working class to capitulation or to certain defeat.

When the revolution broke out, the Mensheviks entertained a finished conception of the working class as a weapon for the

defence of the interests of the bourgeoisie, for whom the proletariat was to clear the path to power. The rising tide of revolution prevented the Mensheviks from adhering consistently to this position; it drove them to the Left and obliged them to revise their attitude towards the liberal bourgeoisie. But the Mensheviks remained true to their original views on the peasantry. Subsequently, the Mensheviks themselves mercilessly criticised the tactics they had adopted at the end of 1905, their momentary aberrations. In exactly the same way many "Left" Social-Democrats in 1919 and 1920 came near to joining the ranks of the Comintern, but later repented it.

Can Trotskyism of the period of 1905 be regarded as an organic and integral part of Menshevism? We know that in 1927 Trotsky categorically declared that he was not a Menshevik after 1904 (but he never had the hardihood to deny his adherence to the Mensheviks in 1904). History knows few instances of such brazen political falsification. Trotsky himself is fond of recalling his work in the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies. But did he not represent the St. Petersburg Menshevik organisation in the Soviet? And could he have done so if he were not a Menshevik? And why, if he was not a Menshevik in 1905, did Trotsky print all his articles in the Menshevik press? Why in the autumn of 1905 did he write for the *Nachalo* and not for the *Novaya Zhizn*?

How profound must have been Trotsky's contempt for the Party in 1927 if he denied such obvious facts so brazenly. Trotsky's adherence to the Mensheviks in 1905 was by no means fortuitous. At their first conference the Mensheviks declared that the working class in Russia could assume power only after a socialist revolution had taken place in Western Europe. As to an alliance of the working class with the peasantry, the Mensheviks, like Trotsky, regarded that as a utopia of the Narodniki.

The underestimation by orthodox Menshevism and its Trotskyist variant of the importance of the peasantry amounted in reality to a disbelief in the capacity of the proletariat to lead

\* In his recent memoirs Trotsky abandons himself so completely as to compare the official organ of the Mensheviks, *Nachalo*, with the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, edited by Marx in 1848, while the *Novaya Zhizn*, headed at that time by Lenin, he calls dull and tedious as compared with the *Nachalo* of Dan and Martov.

the peasant movement, and a denial of the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution.

In spite of their verbal concessions to Bolshevism and their extreme revolutionary phraseology, the tactics of the Mensheviks and Trotskyists were in fact defeatist and liquidationist, and this very soon became obvious. Trotsky's attitude throughout the whole of 1905 towards the question of armed insurrection was purely Menshevik. Like the Mensheviks, Trotsky favoured "spontaneity" in this cardinal question. This was the theory he defended in court: he denied that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies had ever made preparations for armed insurrection, of which the tsarist prosecutor had accused it, and declared that the uprising was bound to occur of its own accord.

Pokrovsky was right when he stated in his *The Role of the Working Class in the 1905 Revolution* that Trotsky in 1905 was a genuine Menshevik and that he was opposed to armed insurrection. Pokrovsky quotes an extremely interesting excerpt from a speech of Trotsky's in which the latter literally declared:

"Do not forget that only recently have conditions been created which permit us to arrange meetings attended by thousands and to organise the wide masses, and that we are already dictating conditions to the world stock exchange."

Instead of calling upon the masses to revolt against tsarism, Trotsky, like a liberal, deceived the workers, declaring that even under tsarism they were in a position to dictate their terms to the world stock exchange. Trotsky also assured the workers that in the forthcoming elections the proletariat would "blow up the government of Count Witte and its master." Here we have it—the overthrow of the government not by armed insurrection but by elections. Thus the Menshevik Trotsky betrays himself even in his period of maximum "Leftism." In the same way Trotsky deceived the workers by representing the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies as a labour government. As a matter of fact, the power of government had still to be conquered; the autocracy had still to be overthrown. Trotsky's liberal talk only served to divert the workers from this main task and to create among them the illusion that victory had already been achieved.

Why did the Mensheviks at the end of 1905 move to the Left and not to the Right? Because the bourgeoisie had not yet

succeeded in coming to a definite understanding with the tsarist government; because the bourgeoisie had not quite given up hope of using the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in their own interests; because the bourgeoisie was still not sufficiently consolidated to take under firm control its political agents within the working class movement; because Menshevism, thanks to its revolutionary phrases, had the support of certain revolutionary elements, and the latter to some extent kept Menshevism in check; and finally, because Menshevism, like every form of opportunism, possessed in a very high degree the capacity to adapt itself to conditions and to swim with the current. That is why the triumph of reaction put an abrupt end to the "Left" phrasemongering of the Mensheviks and drove them far to the Right. From that moment Menshevism, which in 1905 had been wavering between the Bolsheviks and the liberals, and which during the period of the rising tide of revolution had manoeuvred towards the Bolsheviks, began rapidly to assume the character of consistently anti-revolutionary and anti-proletarian liquidationism.

Menshevism was a bourgeois agency within the working class movement, and as such undoubtedly helped both ideologically and organisationally to undermine the position of the revolutionary proletariat; even when it appeared to have adopted an extreme Left position it still continued to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.

The Bolshevik Party alone, led by Lenin, came out in the 1905 Revolution with a clear-cut policy calculated on the triumph of the bourgeois-democratic revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat and the immediate transformation of that revolution into a socialist revolution. The Bolshevik Party alone led the revolutionary struggle of the masses in organising and carrying through the armed insurrection.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REVOLUTION OF 1905-07—AFTER THE DECEMBER INSURRECTION

*Elections to the First Duma—The Fourth Congress—Revision of the agrarian programme—Resolutions on tactics—Resolutions on organisation—Composition and acts of the First Duma—In the interval between the Dumas—The struggle for the Party after the Fourth Congress—The Second All-Russian Conference—The St. Petersburg split—The Second Duma—The Fifth Congress. its composition—Tactical resolutions of the Fifth Congress—Dissolution of the Duma, June 3, 1907—Result of the struggle for the Party—The Bolshevik organisation prior to the triumph of reaction—Bolshevism and the lessons of the first revolution*

#### *Elections to the First Duma*

The December defeat was the turning point in the revolution. From then on the tide of revolution began slowly but definitely to subside. The decline, however, proceeded unevenly. In the spring of 1906, and partly also in the spring of 1907, we observe recrudescences of the revolutionary struggle. The dissolution of the Duma on June 3, 1907, marked a definite victory of the counter-revolution. It is noteworthy, however, that although there were no outward signs of a revolutionary movement on a wide national scale after December, nevertheless, activity continued to be manifested by the advanced sections of the working class belonging to, or closely connected with, the Party. In the year 1906 and the early half of 1907 the growth of the Party, the development of Party activity and the consolidation of its organisation were at a maximum. The Bolshevik organisation recovered very rapidly from the blows it had received in December and began once more to develop intense political activity.

The first important question that faced the Party after the collapse of the December revolt was the attitude to be adopted towards the State Duma. A new electoral law promulgated December 11, 1905, replaced the regulations which had been drawn up for the Bulygin Duma. Subsequently, by the law of

February 20, the Duma was transformed from a deliberative into a legislative body, although with extremely circumscribed functions. The category of electors in the cities was extended: in addition to houseowners, tenants were also granted the vote. The number of urban electors was thereby multiplied. In addition, there were created what were known as labour *curiae*. The system was as follows. the workers in the factories elected their representatives, one from each factory employing more than fifty workers, and in the larger factories and mills one representative for every thousand workers. These representatives appointed the electors. A definite number of electors (from the workers) were to attend the provincial electoral colleges together with the electors appointed by the landowners, burghers, and peasants. Except for a few of the industrial provinces, the number of workers' electors was everywhere extremely limited: one or two to each provincial or city electoral college consisting of 150 to 200 members. The Party had to decide what attitude it should adopt towards the new Duma.

The Bolsheviks continued to advocate boycott. What was the political essence of the Bolshevik campaign for a boycott? As Lenin writes:

"The centre of the whole agitation in favour of a boycott was the fight *against constitutional illusions*. That fight was, in truth, the very soul of the boycott . . . The Mensheviks were never able to comprehend this side of the boycott. It always appeared to them that to fight constitutional illusions in an epoch of incipient constitutionalism was folly, absurdity and anarchism" \*

The boycott of the Bulygin Duma (which never met) took place at a time when the tide of revolution was swiftly rising, and was, as Lenin wrote, "a natural complement of the charged atmosphere." That boycott was eminently successful. The attempt of the autocracy to sidetrack the masses by means of the Bulygin Duma from the revolutionary struggle and to direct them into the path of a monarchist constitutionalism and police constitutional institutions, such as the Duma, was a complete failure.

But with the collapse of the December insurrection the situation changed.

"The December struggle settled the question otherwise the old regime triumphed, repulsed the onslaught of the people and retained

\* Lenin, "Against the Boycott," *Collected Works*, Vol. XII.

its position. But, of course, there were at that time no grounds for regarding that triumph as decisive. The insurrection of December 1905 had its sequel in a series of scattered and partial armed insurrections and strikes in the summer of 1906." \*

It was in view of this situation that the Party decided to boycott the First Duma. "The slogan of the boycott of the Witte Duma was a slogan for a fight to concentrate and generalise these insurrections,"<sup>†</sup> although the revolution was already on the wane.

The proposal to boycott the Duma met with the approval of the more advanced elements of the working class, and in St. Petersburg, Poland and the Baltic Provinces was eminently successful. In other parts of Russia the peasants, as well as a section of the workers, took part in the voting, with the result that the deputies elected by the workers were not Party members, although their sympathies were with the Social-Democrats.

Speaking of the parliamentary tactics of the Bolsheviks from the point of view of fraternal parties in Western Europe, Lenin wrote:

"Russian experience has given us one successful and correct (1905) and one incorrect (1906) example of the application of the boycott by the Bolsheviks." \*\*\*

Lenin here characterises as erroneous the tactics of boycotting the First Duma, since the Party failed to reckon with the fact that the revolution was on the decline and that the country was not on the eve of armed insurrection.

In the other *curiae* the Cadet Party was victorious.\*\*\*\* It had the support of a large number of the democratic electors, particularly the petty bourgeoisie of the towns. Their victory, as Lenin pointed out in his pamphlet *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Labour Party*, reflected the illusion, harboured by the vast mass of democratic electors, that in view of the fact that the revolution had failed in a direct conflict with tsarism, in the form of armed insurrection, the Cadets might succeed in gaining a constitution by parliamentary means.

\* *Ibid*

† *Ibid*.

\*\*\* Lenin, "Left Wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXV.

\*\*\*\* The Cadet (abbreviation for Constitutional-Democratic) Party was formed in October 1905.



"We have no reason to envy the successes of the Cadets," Lenin wrote. "Petty-bourgeois illusions and faith in the Duma are still fairly strong among the people. They must be outlived. And the more complete the triumph of the Cadets in the Duma, the sooner will they be outlived. We welcome the successes of the Girondists of the Great Russian Revolution. They will be followed by the uprising of still greater masses of the people, more energetic and revolutionary sections will come to the fore, they will rally around the proletariat, they will carry our great bourgeois revolution to its conclusion, they will open up an era of socialist revolution in the West" \*

### *The Fourth Congress*

As already mentioned, a conference of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks held towards the end of 1905 decided to summon a "Unity" Congress at the beginning of 1906.

The Unity, Fourth, or Stockholm Congress of the Party was held in April 1906. Thirty-six thousand organised workers took part in the elections to the Congress, appointing one delegate from every 250-300 members. Representatives from the national Social-Democratic organisations which were to affiliate to the Party at the Fourth Congress attended in the capacity of guests. Among these parties was the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania. That organisation had sent its negotiators to the Second Congress, but since the Congress (acting on the point of the programme which declared the right of nations to self-determination) had refused to declare against the independence of Poland, the Polish Social-Democrats declined to enter the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. During the revolution the Polish Social-Democrats had developed considerable activity among the proletariat of Poland, particularly in the large industrial centres (Warsaw, Lodz and the Dombrovo coal basin). They combated Polish social-chauvinism as represented by the Polish Socialist Party, although they were considerably hampered in this work by an incorrect attitude on the national question of the Polish Social-Democratic Party itself (denial of the right of nations to self-determination). This party also occupied a false and opportunist attitude towards the peasant question, one similar to that of the Mensheviks and particularly of the Trotskyists. This

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol IX.

fact also extremely hampered the work of revolutionising the Polish rural districts and played into the hands of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties.

The leaders of the Polish Social-Democratic Party—Rosa Luxemburg, Tyszko, and others—shared the theory of permanent revolution propounded by Trotsky. Rosa Luxemburg indeed, together with Parvus, was one of the authors of that theory.

The Polish Social-Democrats were also opposed to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies and to mass, formally non-partisan, trade union organisations, and displayed a patently Menshevik tendency to exalt the principle of spontaneity in the working class movement. The result was that the Polish Social-Democrats failed to appreciate the role of the Party as the leader of the working class masses; they unjustly demanded that the trade unions should formally declare their party allegiance; they tended to keep aloof from non-partisan workers and, like the Mensheviks, regarded Lenin's view of the necessity of preparing for armed insurrection as Blanquist.

But, on the other hand, the Polish Social-Democrats vigorously rejected the Menshevik acceptance of the bourgeois liberals as allies of the working class.

Among the independent national organisations was the Social-Democratic Party of the Latvian provinces (now Latvia), which had been formed in 1903 and which had rapidly won considerable influence among the industrial and agricultural proletarian masses of that country.<sup>1</sup> The working class members of the Latvian Party were for the most part inclined towards Bolshevism, but the Mensheviks enjoyed a certain degree of influence among the leaders of the Party, while among a section of the officials there prevailed a spirit of stagnant conciliationism.<sup>1</sup>\*

\* Social-Democratic organisations had existed in Latvia ever since the 'nineties.

\*\* In addition to the organisations enumerated, during the 1905-07 Revolution there also existed the Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Armenian national Social-Democratic parties. Negotiations were conducted by these organisations for affiliation to the RSDLP, but were terminated by the onset of reaction. The Armenian Social-Democratic organisation affiliated with the Party at the Fifth (London) Congress. The Lithuanian Social-Democrats secured the election of five deputies from the Kovno gubernia to the Second Duma, who participated in the Social-Democratic fraction of the Second Duma with the right to speak but not to vote.

The leaders of the Bund sided with the "Left" Mensheviks concealing their opportunist Menshevik position by "Left" phraseology. The petty-bourgeois national tendencies of the Bund on questions of the programme and organisation placed it outside the ranks of the Party at the Second Congress and characterised all its subsequent actions. The national programme of the Bund was one of national cultural autonomy, a typical bourgeois-nationalist demand: the various nationalities, independently of the territory they occupied, were to comprise legally constituted (extra-territorial) organisations; they were to collect and have the disposal of taxation for cultural purposes and have control of schools and cultural organisations. The workers of the various nationalities were to be separated from each other and united with the bourgeoisie of their particular nationality, together with whom they were to contend with workers of other nationalities for their share of the budget.

Owing to the fact that the growth of the organisations had been proceeding as a result of an increase not only of working class membership but also of intellectuals belonging to the urban lower middle class (for instance, 90 per cent of the membership of the strongest organisation in Transcaucasia, the Georgian organisation, consisted of petty bourgeois), and also owing to the fact that a large number of the younger working class members of the Party (those who had joined at the end of 1905) had not yet discerned the true character of the Mensheviks, who at that time made great play of revolutionary phraseology—the Mensheviks managed to gain a majority in the elections to the Congress and were represented by sixty-two voting delegates, as against forty-nine from the Bolsheviks.\*

An exact, detailed and extremely vivid account of the proceedings of the Congress was given by Lenin in his *Report on the Unity Congress*, presented in writing to the St. Petersburg workers, by whom Lenin had been delegated to the Congress.\*†

\* Among the Bolshevik delegates to the Congress were: Lenin, Stalin, A. P. Smirnov, A. Bubnov, V. V. Vorovsky, I. A. Teodorovich, A. I. Rykov, Krassin, Frunze, Romyantsev (who subsequently left the Party), Lunacharsky, Artem (Sergeyev), K. Voroshilov, Kubyak, Yaroslavsky, I. I. Stepanov-Skvortsov, S. I. Gussev, Kanatchikov, Nakoryakov, S. Shaumyan, B. T. Pozern and Alexinsky. The Polish Social-Democratic Party was represented by A. Warski, F. E. Dzerzhinsky and Hanecki.

\*\* Lenin, "Report on the Unity Congress," *Selected Works*, Vol. III.

*Revision of the Agrarian Programme*

The main question facing the Stockholm Congress was the necessity for a new agrarian programme. The agrarian programme adopted by the Second Congress had become entirely antiquated: it demanded the confiscation only of the *otrezki* and not the confiscation of the whole of the landlords' estates. The Bolsheviks, and even the Mensheviks, now moved for a revision of the agrarian programme. The agenda of the Congress also contained a number of important tactical and organisational questions dealing with the current situation, the state Duma, armed insurrection, the peasant movement, partisan warfare, the trade unions, and the fusion with the national Social-Democratic organisations.

In deciding the nature of its agrarian programme the Party had at the same time to decide whether to base itself on the assumption of a new upsurge of the revolution or on the assumption that the revolution would be defeated. The main speaker on behalf of the Bolsheviks was Lenin, who sponsored the nationalisation of the land. He urged that the aim of the Party in the current revolution must be a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, that the peasantry, as well as the proletariat, was interested in the revolution being carried to completion, and that in order to win the support of the peasantry for the proletariat the peasant movement must be supported even to the extent of the confiscation of the estates of the landlords. Lenin considered that in the event of a victory of the democratic revolution the working class would be faced with the question of a socialist revolution. Hence, Lenin concluded that the Party must adopt an agrarian programme based on the prospect that the democratic revolution would be carried to completion, one that envisaged the subsequent socialist aims of the struggle. Accordingly, Lenin proposed in the event of the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the establishment of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat, to abolish private property in land and that all land should be transferred to the state, that is, nationalised.

This envisaged the establishment of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Nationalisation itself could be accomplished within the limits of a bourgeois-dem-

ocratic revolution, since, far from hindering the development of capitalism, it would only serve to accelerate that development. Nationalisation of the land was compatible with the capitalist system. Lenin at the Stockholm Congress declared for nationalisation of the land, firstly, because he associated it with the most effective abolition of the survivals of feudalism, and, secondly, because he envisaged the prospect of the revolution growing into a socialist revolution.

The Mensheviks held an entirely different view. They were opposed to land nationalisation on the grounds that, by assuming possession of the land, the power of the state, which would be under the control of the big bourgeoisie, would be reinforced. This opinion was in close line with the whole policy of the Mensheviks. They frankly calculated on the triumph of the bourgeoisie in the Russian revolution, and not of the proletariat. They believed that the bourgeoisie would reach an agreement with the government, and in that case there could be no question of the confiscation of the landed estates. And so the Mensheviks twisted and squirmed, endeavouring in every way to evade the question of confiscation. The question was ignored in the draft programme drawn up by the Mensheviks, and it was only owing to the insistence of the Bolsheviks that the word, confiscation, was inserted at the Congress. As a matter of fact, the Menshevik programme, declaring itself opposed to the nationalisation of the land, at best envisaged only a partial success of the revolution; in which case, of course, there could be no question of the confiscation of the land. As against nationalisation, the Mensheviks, headed by their agrarian theoretician, Maslov, and by Plekhanov, set forth the demand for what they call municipalisation.

They proposed handing over the land taken from the landlords to regional local government bodies. They asserted that in a bourgeois society local government bodies were more democratic than the state, since the state spent its resources on armies, police, class courts, etc., whereas local government bodies spent their resources on hospitals and schools. They considered that the Zemstvos would be more democratic than the state because they believed that the state would remain a purely bourgeois state with its class police force, prisons and standing army. The Menshevik agrarian programme was based

on the prospect of only a partial success of the revolution, in effect, on its defeat, and the establishment of the stable rule of the bourgeoisie.

The most frankly opportunist speech in defence of the Menshevik programme and in opposition to the Bolshevik proposal for land nationalisation was made by Plekhanov, who demanded that the Bolsheviks should give a guarantee against restoration in the event of nationalisation being carried into effect.

In his concluding speech on the agrarian programme, Lenin made a vivid and brilliant reply to Plekhanov.

"If it is a question of a real and genuine economic guarantee against restoration, *i.e.*, of a guarantee that would create economic conditions under which restoration would become impossible, then one must say that the only guarantee against restoration is a socialist revolution in the West; there can be no other guarantee in the real and full meaning of the term."

For Plekhanov, and the Mensheviks in general, this argument was, of course, not convincing, since they believed that the bourgeoisie would retain power in Russia and in the West for a long time to come. Lenin held a different view:

"France at the end of the eighteenth century was surrounded by feudal and semi-feudal states. Russia of the twentieth century, in accomplishing its bourgeois revolution, is surrounded by countries in which a socialist proletariat is standing prepared on the eve of the last struggle with the bourgeoisie." \*\*

Lenin fully perceived the tremendous international significance of the Russian revolution. He clearly understood that only the seizure of power by a socialist proletariat of the West could provide a complete guarantee against restoration. But there were certain relative guarantees against restoration which depended upon the internal forces of the revolution.

"If the question of guarantees is placed on a different footing, *i.e.*, if we have in mind relative and conditional guarantees against restoration, then it must be said that the only conditional and relative guarantee against restoration is that the revolution should be accomplished with the greatest possible decision, that it should be effected by the revolutionary class itself with the least possible participation of intermediaries, compromisers and conciliators of all kinds, and that

\* Lenin, "Concluding Remarks on the Agrarian Question," *Collected Works*, Vol. IX.

\*\* *Ibid*

that revolution should really be carried to its completion, and my project [*i.e.*, the nationalisation of the land—*N. P.*] 'provides the maximum relative guarantee against restoration.'"<sup>\*</sup>

Lenin's proposal for land nationalisation did indeed provide the maximum guarantee against restoration, since it was based on the bourgeois-democratic revolution being carried to completion and its transformation into a socialist revolution.

Nevertheless, the Congress adopted the Menshevik programme, although with several amendments introduced by the Bolsheviks. It was the insistence of the Bolsheviks that secured the introduction of a clause demanding the nationalisation of forests and waters; the word "alienation" (*i.e.*, of the landed estates) was replaced by the word "confiscation" and a clause was added advocating the independent organisation of the agricultural proletariat. Furthermore, the Congress agreed that, in the event of the revolution not being carried to completion, the Party should insist that the land seized from the landlords should be distributed among the peasants as their private property.<sup>\*\*</sup> Flayed by the criticism of the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks hesitated to adopt a frankly liquidationist policy towards the revolution.

### *Resolutions on Tactics*

The tactical problems facing the Congress in essence revolved around the question of the attitude of the Party towards the bourgeois liberals and the peasantry. The December defeat made it patent that the working class could not hope to conduct a successful struggle against the autocracy without allies. The Trotskyist current in the Menshevik movement, which had advocated the slogan "no tsar but a workers' government," and which held the opinion that the working class could get along without allies, did not manifest itself independently at the Congress, but merged with the general Menshevik current, as was pointed out by Lenin, in his *Report on the Unity Congress*. What allies should the Party strive to enlist? The Bolsheviks

<sup>\*</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>\*\*</sup> The Bolsheviks supported this point on the grounds that the division of the landed estates among the peasants would result in a more permanent abolition of the landed estates than the municipalisation advocated by the Menshevik programme. As Lenin wrote, division was a mistake, but not harmful, municipalisation, however, was harmful. The Bolsheviks preferred division to municipalisation.

advocated an alliance with the peasantry, because they believed in a new upsurge of revolution, in the revolution being carried to completion and in its transformation from a democratic into a socialist revolution. The timid, half-revealed Menshevik policy of alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie, who had by this time adopted an unambiguously counter-revolutionary position, was based on the belief that a compromise would be reached between the autocracy and the bourgeoisie and that a régime would be established in Russia similar to the Prussian or Austrian monarchy, a régime under which the workers might also secure a few wretched rights.

The chief speaker for the Mensheviks in the discussion of the current situation was Martynov, and for the Bolsheviks—Lenin. The resolution proposed by the Bolsheviks on this subject stated that the feature of the revolution at the moment was the fact that the liberal bourgeois were abandoning their oppositionist position for a policy of compromise with tsarism. At the same time the movement was being reinforced by new sections of the petty bourgeoisie, who were capable of supporting the proletariat to the very end in its struggle for a democratic republic. Under these circumstances, the immediate duty of the proletariat was to continue the struggle for the completion of the democratic revolution.

“Any attempt to minimise this duty,” ran the resolution of the Bolsheviks, “will inevitably lead to the working class being transformed from the leader of the popular revolution enjoying the following of the masses of the democratic peasantry into a passive participant in the revolution, dragging in the tail of the liberal and monarchist bourgeoisie.”

The speaker for the Mensheviks, Martynov, based his main hopes on the conflict which, in his opinion, was bound to arise between the Cadets and the government in the State Duma, or, more precisely, on the belief that the government would make concessions to the Cadets. According to him, the Cadets were erecting the scaffolding for the revolution. However, although the Mensheviks had a majority at the Congress, they hesitated to carry through their resolution on the current situation and themselves withdrew it.

The Menshevik resolution on the Social-Democratic fraction in the State Duma, which the Congress adopted, condemned the tactics of boycott and recognised the necessity of supporting



the Duma, on the grounds that it would be in opposition to the government.

The Bolsheviks at the Congress declared that the Duma was counter-revolutionary, that it was necessary to organise the masses outside the Duma, using for that purpose those members of the Duma who had connections with the working class and the peasantry.

A similar difference in attitude revealed itself on the question of armed insurrection. Was the Party to base its policy on the assumption of a new upsurge of revolution, or was it to admit that the revolution had been finally defeated?

The Bolsheviks considered that the revolution had reached the stage of insurrection and that the Party must concentrate on its organisation and realisation. The Mensheviks, in effect, refused to discuss the question of insurrection and condemned insurrection, although they hesitated to say so in so many words. Only a few of the Menshevik leaders had the courage to give expression to their true thoughts and openly declare their opposition to armed insurrection. They agreed with Plekhanov, who was of the opinion that even in December the Party should not have taken up arms. The lack of unity among the Mensheviks on this fundamental tactical question was patently manifested by an incident recounted by Lenin in his *Report on the Unity Congress*. The Menshevik resolution on armed insurrection contained a point which was rather disconcerting to the Mensheviks themselves. It declared that the aim of the revolutionary struggle was to wrest power from the hands of the government. It followed that the aim of the revolution which was led by the proletariat, a fact which the Mensheviks publicly did not dispute, was to wrest the power of government from the enemy. Plekhanov, the most Right of the Mensheviks at the Congress, proposed to replace the words *wrest the power* by the words *wrest the rights*. This was a purely Cadet formula, against which the Bolsheviks protested in the most vigorous fashion. Some of the Mensheviks lost their heads. Plekhanov's resolution was rejected and an absurd situation resulted: on the one hand, the Mensheviks were opposed to the Party participating in a provisional revolutionary government, and on the other, their own resolution declared that the proletariat must wrest the power from the government.

On the subject of the trade unions the Congress adopted the resolution proposed by the Mensheviks. The latter considered that the trade unions must maintain a neutral attitude towards political parties. In their opinion the Party and the trade unions each enjoyed full competence, but each in its own field (the Party must confine itself to the political struggle and the trade unions to the economic struggle). They did not recognise the claim of the Party to lead the trade unions. Since, however, the Mensheviks in their resolution were obliged to admit the necessity for intimate ideological contact between the trade unions and the Party and did not mention neutrality, the Bolsheviks found it possible to vote for this resolution and to withdraw their own, which had openly declared the necessity for the leadership of the trade unions by the Party. Thanks to this compromise the resolution on trade unions was adopted by the Congress unanimously. With equal unanimity the Congress adopted the resolution on the attitude towards the peasant movement, which emphasised the revolutionary character of that movement and the necessity for the working class and the Party to support it in every possible way.

On this occasion the Menshevik majority at the Congress lacked the courage to sever contact with the revolutionary peasant movement. It was a concession to revolutionary phraseology.

The question of *partisan* attacks evoked profound differences of opinion. Partisan attacks was the term applied to raids on banks, arsenals and on government troops, practised by the fighting squads of the Party. The Bolsheviks regarded partisan attacks as one of the methods of preparing for armed insurrection and as important training for the fighting squads of the Party. By the vote of the Mensheviks, the Stockholm Congress declared its disapprobation of partisan attacks, particularly in respect to the expropriation of treasury funds, but made an exception in the case of arsenals and ammunition. On this question too the Congress adopted a half-measure decision.

### *Resolutions on Organisation*

The most important event at the Fourth Congress was the union of the Party with the national Social-Democratic organisations (the Polish and Latvian Parties and the Bund). The

Polish and Latvian Parties joined the Party as autonomous organisations functioning in specific territories (Poland and the Latvian province). The Bund renounced its former claim to be the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat, but was recognised by the Party as an organisation whose activities were not confined within territorial boundaries. Thus, the organisations of the Bund, the ranks of which contained a large number of Jewish workers, might exist in the same towns and side by side with the general organisations of the Party. This was an undoubted retreat from one of the fundamental organisational principles of the Party, *viz*, that its organisations united workers independently of their nationality. The Bolsheviks, however, regarded this concession as a temporary one, consenting to it in order to win over the workers within the Bund. Moreover, until such time as the national question should be discussed at the next Party Congress, the Bund was permitted to retain its existing national programme, which provided for what was known as national cultural autonomy, *i.e.*, the organisation of the members of various nationalities independently of territory into separate unions, education and other cultural activities being taken out of the hands of the state and the local government bodies and entrusted to these unions. The Bund had borrowed this programme from certain of the Austrian Social-Democrats (Rudolf Springer and Otto Bauer), although it had been rejected by the Austrian Social-Democratic Party Congress. The Russian, and especially the Caucasian, Social-Democrats, whose activities were conducted among proletarian masses of the most diverse national make-up (in 1905-06 the leadership of the Caucasian Social-Democratic movement was in the hands of the Georgian Mensheviks), were opposed to national cultural autonomy on the grounds that it divided the workers according to nationality and was a product of petty-bourgeois nationalism. Several years later the Georgian Mensheviks openly espoused national cultural autonomy.

The Central Committee elected by the Congress guaranteed a decided majority for the Mensheviks.\*

\* The Central Committee consisted of seven Mensheviks Rozanov, L. Goldman, L. Khinchuk, Bakhmetiev, Krokhamal, Radchenko and Kolokolnikov, and only three Bolsheviks: Krassin, who had been most active at the

Every decision of the Fourth Congress reflected the irresolution of its Menshevik majority. The adoption of the agrarian programme and the resolutions on the State Duma, armed insurrection and partisan attacks marked a decided step towards liquidation and the revision of the revolutionary tactics of the Party, even in the form in which, under the pressure of the proletarian masses, they were adopted by the Mensheviks, who wavered between the working class and the liberal bourgeoisie. The triumph of reaction drove the Mensheviks towards the Right, but the tide of revolution still ran high, and the Mensheviks still hesitated to be consistent in their evolution towards the point of view of counter-revolutionary liberalism. They were still obliged to resort to revolutionary phraseology.

The Bolsheviks voted against the majority of the resolutions of the Fourth Congress and strenuously fought for the adoption of their own resolutions. After the Congress they considered it advisable to adhere formally to its decisions. The Bolsheviks were convinced that events would prove the correctness of their policy, particularly to those workers who still followed the Mensheviks, and that the influence of the Mensheviks within the Party would be nullified. The Bolsheviks also reckoned on the growth of their influence within the national organisations, an expectation which events justified.

Determined as they were to continue to fight the Mensheviks for control of the Party, the Bolsheviks at the Stockholm Congress set up their own independent centre.

The Menshevik majority within the Party proved to be extremely short-lived.

Congress and was the main speaker for the Bolsheviks on the question of armed insurrection, Desnitsky-Stroev and Rykov, the latter being subsequently replaced by Bogdanov.

Following the example of the Second Congress, and on the insistence of the Mensheviks, the Congress elected an Editorial Board for the central organ which was entirely independent of the Central Committee and contained not a single Bolshevik. Its members were Martov, Dan, Marnynov, Potresov and Maslov. During the whole of its existence the Editorial Board did not issue a single number of the central organ but devoted itself to controlling the Central Committee, the functions of which it virtually appropriated to itself.

*Composition and Acts of the First Duma*

The First Duma began to function almost simultaneously with the Fourth Party Congress. The Cadets (Constitutional-Democrats) proved to be the strongest party within the First Duma.

The kernel of the Left wing consisted of the Trudoviki (Group of Toil), which had the adherence of non-Party Left-inclined peasants who favoured a revolutionary platform and demanded the confiscation of the landed estates and their transfer to the peasants. The Left wing was also joined by a small group of working class deputies, who were sympathetic to the Social-Democrats, but who had stood for election to the Duma in spite of the instructions of the Party to boycott it. The majority of this group subsequently joined the Social-Democratic fraction, which consisted of seventeen members.

The entire history of the First Duma consists of the attempts of the Cadet Party, the dominant party in the Duma, to come to an understanding with tsarism. For a long time the tsarist government hesitated to disperse the Duma, fearing to provoke a widespread revolutionary movement. Signs of a new revolutionary movement among the peasant masses were observed in the spring of 1906. The state of mind of the peasantry began to reflect itself in the army. In the middle of 1906 we observe an acceleration of the movement among the peasantry; while the working class, after a certain period of passivity began to develop a widespread economic struggle, which showed tendencies of developing into a political struggle. These circumstances made it possible to use the Duma for revolutionary purposes, as a tribune from which, on the one hand, to conduct agitation among the masses and, on the other, to exert influence on the revolutionary elements within the Duma, particularly on the Trudoviki, and through them on the peasant revolution. But the movement among the peasants and the hopes the latter had placed in the Duma were not powerful enough to restrain the tsarist government from dissolving the Duma. On July 8, 1906, the First State Duma was dissolved and the summoning of a new Duma set for February 20 of the following year. The tsarist government hoped that during this interval it would succeed in crushing the revolutionary movement and securing the election of a Duma on whose support it could rely.

*In the Interval Between the Dumas*

How did the masses react to the dissolution of the Duma? The Social-Democratic fraction in the Duma, made up of deputies from Georgia (elected after the decision of the Stockholm Congress to participate in the elections) and of workers who were sympathetic to the Party, but who had stood for election in spite of the decision of the Party to boycott the Duma, consisted overwhelmingly of Mensheviks headed by Noah Jordania and Isidor Ramishvili. This fraction, together with the central committees of the revolutionary parties, attempted to organise a movement against the government in retaliation to the dispersal of the Duma. The Menshevik majority of the Central Committee elected at the Fourth Congress, by thus endeavouring to issue to the mass movement the slogan of restoring the dissolved Cadet Duma, exposed themselves as avowed supporters of the Cadets. This slogan was ignored by the movement. The latter failed to assume widespread proportions, if one does not count the unsuccessful military revolt in Kronstadt and Sveaborg\* and several equally unsuccessful outbursts among the peasants in Saratov, Voronezh, Stavropol and other provinces.

An attempt of the Menshevik Central Committee at the end of July to organise a general strike in St Petersburg failed. This was indicative of the reluctance of the masses to engage in a strike which by itself could not overthrow the government. For after the mutiny in the fleet had been crushed, there could be no hope of a strike developing into armed revolt. For that reason the Bolsheviks were opposed to a strike and to unprepared and partial actions which could only lead to partial defeats. The Bolsheviks advocated armed insurrection on a national scale.

The seven months that now supervened, known as the inter-Duma period, marked the steady reinforcement of the machinery of the government, which had been shattered by the revolution.

\* Preparations were made for a simultaneous mutiny in the Baltic fleet and in all the Baltic fortresses (Sveaborg, Kronstadt, Reval and Vyborg). But the mutiny was extremely badly organised and lacked suitable political and technical leadership. It was vigorously suppressed by the government. Hundreds of revolutionary soldiers and sailors either perished at the hands of the punitive expedition or were condemned and executed by court martial.

Having dispersed the Duma, the government set about winning the sympathy and support of the "strong" peasants. This is known as Stolypin's policy. A law, promulgated on November 9, 1906, permitted peasants to withdraw from the village communes. This was designed to satisfy the kulak elements by enabling them to acquire the best of the communal lands as their personal property. Land redistribution commissions were set up by the government and a part of the lands of the state and of the appanage lands was placed at the disposal of the Peasant Bank for sale among the wealthy peasants.

At the same time, brutal measures were taken to crush the revolutionary movement. In August 1906, regulations governing the procedure of courts martial were issued, which sanctioned the death penalty for active participation in the revolutionary movement. This was the signal for mass executions, intensified repression of revolutionary parties and mass arrests and exile. But the reactionary movement was still unable to fetter the active elements among the working class members of the Bolshevik organisations.

The Party organisations and the trade unions continued to carry on energetic work.

### *The Struggle for the Party After the Fourth Congress*

The struggle between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks assumed acute form after the Fourth Congress. The Menshevik Central Committee immediately adopted a Right policy, calling for support of the demand of the Cadet Duma for a responsible Duma ministry.

The Mensheviks were explicit: the working class was to demand the division of power between the tsarist government and the liberal bourgeoisie as represented by the Cadet Party. The Bolsheviks vigorously opposed this definitely capitulationist slogan.

\*The period 1906-07 witnessed an intensive growth of the trade unions, in spite of all the hindrances placed in the way of their organisation by the law of March 4, 1906. This law forbade the amalgamation of trade unions both within individual cities (the formation of central trades councils), or within national branches of industry. Nevertheless, central trades councils existed illegally in every large city. A number of national trade union conferences were also organised, both general conferences and conferences of individual branches of industry (metal-workers, printers, etc.). About the middle of 1907 the Russian trade unions counted more than 300,000 members.

When the Duma was dissolved the Menshevik Central Committee demanded the restoration of its mandate; the workers were to fight for the restoration of the Cadet Duma, which had been carrying on secret negotiations with the tsarist government. The Bolsheviks opposed this slogan. Considering the political acts of the Central Committee as a violation of the resolutions even of the Stockholm Congress, the Bolsheviks began an intensive agitation in favour of an extraordinary Party congress. This agitation was directed not only against the policy pursued by the Menshevik Central Committee since the Fourth Congress of completely subordinating the tactics of the Party to the interests of the counter-revolutionary Cadet bourgeoisie; it was also directed against the organisational policy of the Mensheviks, which at this period revealed tendencies which were a definite menace to the very existence of the Party.

We know how bitterly the Mensheviks after the Second Congress criticised the Party organisation of the *Iskra* period for its lack of democracy, lack of contact with the masses, etc. But this criticism was deprived even of the appearance of justification by the rise of the tide of revolution, the widespread development of the Party's activities, the fact that tens of thousands of workers flocked to its ranks and by its reorganisation from top to bottom on democratic principles. Nevertheless, during the "days of freedom" of the autumn of 1905 the Mensheviks agitated in their press for the diffusion of the Party into the working class masses. The attack of the Mensheviks on the organisation of the Party was intensified in the summer of 1906. They argued that it was still insufficiently democratic, that it still had insufficient contacts with the masses, and was therefore incapable of leading them. It was necessary, in their opinion, to summon a congress of non-Party workers to discuss the question of the fundamental reorganisation of the Party, or, more correctly, the creation of an entirely new party.

In the form in which it existed in the years 1905-06 the Party was a fighting revolutionary organisation, the vanguard of the working class, fighting for socialism, and setting itself the immediate political aim of overthrowing tsarism.

In the view of the Mensheviks, who had sunk to the level of frank liquidationism, such a Party was unnecessary and should be replaced by a reformist party on West-European lines.



In the autumn of 1906 individual Mensheviks openly advocated the reconstruction of the Party into a mass labour party, to embrace all existing labour and socialist organisations and even the non-party working class masses. The Mensheviks, like the Economists, desired to efface all distinction between class and Party, between the working class masses and their vanguard. This tendency subsequently came to be known as *Axelrodism*, since Axelrod, the most prominent of the Menshevik writers on tactical questions, was the initiator of the idea of a non-Party labour congress for the purpose allegedly of reorganising the Party, but actually of liquidating it. Twenty years later certain Bolsheviks, headed by Zinoviev and Kamenev, not suspecting that they were repeating the old song of the Mensheviks, were to demand that the Party, in order to become a "workers' " party, should immediately enrol several millions of non-party workers in its ranks.

In the autumn of 1906, Larin, who was at that time a Menshevik, published a pamphlet entitled *A Broad Labour Party and a Labour Congress*, wherein he argued that the machinery of the Social-Democratic Party could not satisfy the requirements of the working class and that it must expand itself into a broad labour party which would embrace all socialist parties, including the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and all trade union and co-operative organisations. This view was supported by certain other Mensheviks. They made no secret of the fact that their aim was to create a labour party on the British model.

The wide agitation for a labour congress carried on by the Mensheviks in 1906\* contained, true in still undeveloped form, all the elements of the ideas which were to mature several years later and which were to demand the complete liquidation of the illegal organisations of the Party and the creation of a legal reformist party.

### *The Second All-Russian Conference*

The Second Party Conference (which in old Party documents is referred to as the First National Conference) was held in November 1906. It discussed the question of summoning an

\* Axelrod had as early as 1905 proposed the summoning of a labour congress with the purpose of radically reorganising the Party and transforming it into a party on the West-European model.

extraordinary Party congress and a non-party labour congress, and also the tactics to be adopted by the Party in the elections to the Second State Duma. The Mensheviks were chiefly concerned with securing an effective opposition within the Second Duma. In view of the limitations of the electoral law, it was more than probable that the Cadets would comprise the leading opposition party. Despite the resolution of the Fourth Congress forbidding any sort of election agreements with other parties, the Mensheviks, after some wavering, proposed that an agreement should be reached with the Cadets in respect of the town *curiae*. They advanced the already then notorious theory of the "lesser evil," viz., that the Cadets were better than the Black Hundreds and should therefore be voted for, just as in recent times the German Social-Democrats appealed to the workers to vote for Hindenburg in order to prevent the election of Hitler, thereby making it easier for Hitler to receive power. Plekhanov even went so far as to propose a joint election platform of the Party and the Cadets in favour of a "Duma with full powers." As regards the labour *curiae*, even the Mensheviks did not dare to propose that the Party should not be completely independent. In the agrarian *curiae* the Party could not, of course, hope for success. The Georgian Mensheviks, it is true, managed to have their electors appointed by congresses of landowners (it is with good cause that they are now the allies of the Georgian nobility). No better proof was required of the petty-bourgeois, non-proletarian character of the majority of the Georgian organisation, which at that time comprised the main bulwark of Menshevism.\*

The Bolsheviks would not hear of an agreement with the counter-revolutionary Cadet Party. As a general principle they declared for the independence of the Party in the city *curiae*, but by way of exception admitted the possibility of agreement with such revolutionary democratic organisations as recognised the necessity for armed insurrection and which were fighting for a democratic republic, primarily with the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Trudoviki (the "Left bloc"). But the Mensheviks had the majority at the Conference, since they were supported by the Bund, and accordingly their resolution sanctioning agree-

\* As a rule the proletarian elements in Georgia, as in other regions, supported the Bolsheviks.

ments with the Cadets was adopted.<sup>\*</sup> The Bolsheviks, however, managed to introduce amendments guaranteeing their organisations a certain amount of independence in election tactics. For instance, the resolution declared that local organisations could form a *bloc* either with the Lefts, or with the Cadets; the Central Committee was given the right to veto agreements with the Cadets (a merely verbal concession, in view of the fact that the Central Committee was Menshevik), but could not compel a local organisation to make agreements with the Cadets if it were opposed to such agreements.

The Bolsheviks on this occasion insisted on limiting the rights of the Central Committee not, of course, because they had become opponents of centralism, but because the Central Committee was Menshevik. That is why they forced through their point prohibiting the Central Committee from compelling the local organisations to enter into agreements with the Cadets. The Bolsheviks in fact had their own independent party headed by their own centre.

### *The St. Petersburg Split*

The Second Party Conference rejected the Bolsheviks' demand for the immediate summoning of a Party congress, and decided to summon one not sooner than the early part of 1907. During the elections in St. Petersburg a temporary split took place in the local Party organisation owing to the conduct of the Mensheviks. A city conference of the organisation declared against an agreement with the Cadets and in favour of a Left *bloc*. But the Mensheviks were particularly anxious to come to an agreement with the Cadets in St. Petersburg, for that would set the tone for the Party organisations in the provinces. Perceiving that the conference would decide against an agreement with the Cadets, the Mensheviks quit the conference and declared that they would not submit to such a decision. The Menshevik members of the Central Committee and the Menshevik section which had split away from the St. Petersburg organisation thereupon began to negotiate with the Cadets without the knowledge of the organisation. Certain of the Mensheviks even openly declared

<sup>\*</sup> The delegates from the Polish Party and a section of the delegates from the Latvian Party supported the Bolsheviks. Eighteen delegates voted for the Menshevik resolution and fourteen for the Bolshevik resolution.

in favour of an alliance with the Cadets against the Left *bloc*, in which the St. Petersburg organisation was to participate. The Cadets, however, rejected a *bloc*. The Mensheviks were left at a loose end; all they could do was to appeal to their followers not to participate in the voting at all. This was in fact a method of supporting the Cadets against the "Left *bloc*" in which the St. Petersburg Party organisation headed by the Bolsheviks participated.

Lenin wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Duma Elections and the Hypocrisy of Thirty-one Mensheviks*, in which the scandalous policy of the Mensheviks and the Menshevik Central Committee received the treatment it merited. Lenin was brought to a Party trial for this pamphlet. Thus, for the only time in his life, Lenin, a most disciplined Party member, was called upon to defend himself against the charge of violation of Party discipline before a court to which the Menshevik Central Committee had summoned him. The Menshevik Central Committee, however, did not dare allow the case to run its course.\*

### *The Second Duma*

The composition of the Second Duma, elected in the early part of 1907, and commencing its labours on February 20, 1907, differed considerably from that of the First Duma.

The Right wing had grown owing to the intensive repressive measures taken by the government and also to the growing reactionary sentiments of the landed gentry and particularly of the bourgeoisie. The possessing classes sided more and more definitely with extreme reaction.

The Duma Centre was made up of the Cadet fraction and allied groups.

The Left wing was very numerous, consisting of a hundred Trudoviki, fourteen People's Socialists, thirty-four Socialist-Revolutionaries and sixty-four Social-Democrats (together with

\* Not long prior to this a serious collision had occurred in connection with the summoning of a conference of military and fighting organisations, the overwhelming majority of which were Bolshevik. The Menshevik Central Committee, without any justification whatsoever, declared the conference illegitimate, but in spite of this prohibition the conference met and adopted a number of resolutions dealing with preparations for armed insurrection. This conference is one more proof that in spite of formal unity with the Mensheviks the Bolsheviks continued to function as an independent party.

their adherents). The success of the Social-Democrats in the elections was particularly marked, as these figures show.

The majority of the Social-Democratic deputies, however, owed their election to the petty bourgeoisie of the towns (and in Georgia and in certain districts of Lithuania and the Ukraine, to the peasants and small landowners). It is, therefore, not surprising that the Mensheviks enjoyed a considerable majority within this fraction.\*

The political situation in which the Second Duma met differed entirely from the political situation existing at the time of the First Duma. The surge of peasant unrest lent grounds for believing that the people would rise in defence of the First Duma in the event of its dispersal. But the revolutionary movement had declined considerably by the time of the Second Duma. It was partly for this reason that the tactics of the Cadets, who in the First Duma had not hesitated at times to express verbal opposition to the government, now underwent a complete change. The slogan of the Cadets was now to preserve the Duma at all costs, and they were accordingly prepared for any compromise with the government.

The Cadets endeavoured to gain the support of the Left wing. The Social-Democratic fraction was the only one that replied to the declaration of the Stolypin government. It is true that the reply, which had been drawn up by the Mensheviks (the Bolshevik draft had been rejected), was of a thorough-going opportunist character in which socialism was not even mentioned. It was based on the Cadet formula that the executive power must be subordinated to the legislative power. The Bolsheviks succeeded more and more in gaining the support of the peasant elements and of the Left wing of the Duma in general against the Cadets, but their tactics were hampered by the fact that the majority of the Social-Democratic fraction consisted of Mensheviks, who had the support of the Central Committee. The Mensheviks primarily favoured agreement with the Cadets, *i.e.*, with the liberal bourgeoisie, and not with the peasantry. Even in full assembly the Left wing did not comprise an absolute majority within the Second Duma. At decisive moments the Right

\*The deputies who were elected as official candidates of the Party consisted of thirty-three Mensheviks and fifteen Bolsheviks, figures which were entirely out of proportion to the respective number of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks within the Party.

Cadet majority always outweighed the Left bloc. Such was the case during the vote on the size of the contingents of new recruits; such was also the case on the eve of the dissolution, when the Lefts endeavoured to rush through a number of laws of an agitational character.

### *The Fifth Congress: Its Composition*

The Second Duma met on February 20, 1907. In May of the same year the Fifth (or London) Congress of the Party was held. The delegates were again elected directly by the organised workers on a democratic basis. The Fifth Congress is distinguished among pre-1917 congresses by its large number of working class delegates. It was attended by 105 Bolsheviks, 97 Mensheviks, 44 Polish Social-Democrats, 29 Latvians and 57 Bundists.\*

On most questions the Polish Social-Democrats voted with the Bolsheviks and the Bundists with the Mensheviks, while the Latvian Social-Democrats wavered between the two.\*\* This created a confused situation at the Congress and dragged out its labours to such an extent that the Party became saddled with a heavy debt which it managed to settle only with the establishment of the Soviet government.\*\*\*

Of the three weeks the London Congress lasted, nearly two were devoted to the discussion of two questions: the report of the Central Committee and the report of the Duma fraction. The Congress had already devoted two sessions to discussing

\* The Bolsheviks had the majority of the delegates from St Petersburg, the greater number of the delegates from the Central Industrial region and all the delegates from the Urals. The delegates from the Ukraine and the Caucasus were overwhelmingly Menshevik. The Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were almost equally represented among the delegates from the Western region and the Volga region. The delegates from Siberia and Central Asia were predominantly Menshevik.

\*\* The majority of the Latvians, nevertheless, inclined towards the Bolsheviks

\*\*\* The conduct of this Congress strikingly revealed the incapacity of the Menshevik Central Committee to arrange a congress in an organised manner. The delegates were obliged to wander through a number of countries of Northern Europe (Sweden, Norway and Denmark) before an asylum was at last found in the Brotherhood Church in London. Many of the delegates were arrested in crossing and recrossing the border. In spite of its contacts with the bourgeoisie the Menshevik Central Committee failed to provide sufficient funds to conduct the Congress and money had to be borrowed in London.

the rules of procedure and four sessions to discussing the agenda. The Congress devoted its main attention to the reports of the Central Committee and the Duma fraction. On these questions the Bolsheviks fought the Mensheviks all along the line. The co-reporter for the Bolsheviks, A. Bogdanov, in replying to the report of the Central Committee developed a detailed criticism of the opportunist policy of the Menshevik majority of the Central Committee and demanded that the Congress should condemn that policy. This proposal was rejected by the Congress, the Bolsheviks failing to secure the wholehearted support of the national parties.

The second question, the report of the Duma fraction, also took up considerable time. The Bolsheviks demanded that the Congress should place on record a number of political errors committed by the Duma fraction, in particular, the fact that it had pursued a policy of agreement with the Cadets, instead of consistently aiming for the severance of the Left wing from the Cadets, and thus helped to create a situation in which the Duma opposition was virtually under the hegemony of the Cadets. Moreover, the fraction had systematically endeavoured to curtail the revolutionary agrarian programme of the Party, in particular the demand for the confiscation of the landed estates. Again the Bolshevik proposal was lost owing to the wavering of the national delegates. A motion to pass to the next point was adopted, and thus the two weeks spent on the discussion of the reports of the Central Committee and the Duma fraction gave no concrete results.

### *Tactical Resolutions of the Fifth Congress*

But an entirely different situation arose during the discussion of the next fundamental questions on the agenda. The delegates of the national parties, who were inclined to be conciliatory towards the Mensheviks and not to abuse them for their past sins, when it came to the discussion of future tactics reflected, for the most part, the frame of mind of the mass of their membership and displayed a definite tendency to side with the Bolsheviks. The result was that the Congress, with few amendments, adopted the resolution of the Bolsheviks on the question of the attitude towards non-proletarian parties. This

was a step of extreme importance, since the attitude towards non-proletarian parties was equivalent to the attitude towards non-proletarian classes and determined the tactics of the Party in the revolution. The Congress qualified the Cadets as a counter-revolutionary party which must be mercilessly exposed. The Congress declared it essential to co-ordinate the activities of the Social-Democrats with such parties and groups as expressed the interests of the peasantry (the S. R.'s and the Trudoviki), while at the same time unhesitatingly exposing all that was inadequate and reactionary in their demands. At the Third Congress the Party once more officially confirmed the Bolshevik view that the fight must be waged for a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

The adoption of the Bolshevik resolution on the attitude towards non-proletarian parties predetermined the adoption of a similar resolution regarding the State Duma. The London Congress, furthermore, expressed its decided disapproval of the Mensheviks' agitation for a non-party labour congress and their advocacy of a broad labour party. The Congress characterised the idea of a labour congress as anti-Party.\* On the subject of the trade unions, the Congress adopted a decision declaring that the trade unions must recognise the necessity for the leadership of the Party and for organisational contact with the Party. This was also a big victory for the Bolsheviks. On the other hand, the Mensheviks with the support of the national delegates managed to secure the adoption of their resolution on partisan acts. This resolution categorically forbade all armed acts and acts of expropriation and declared that the fighting squads connected with certain of the Party organisations should be disbanded. The Mensheviks were anxious to dissociate the Party as soon as possible from all the attributes of its recent revolutionary past.

The fact that the national delegates, among them the Polish Social-Democrats, who were most closely associated with the Bolsheviks, voted for this resolution reflected a *laissez-faire* attitude on the question of armed revolt, resulting from a failure to appreciate the role of the Party and a reliance on spontaneous forces.

\*Not only the Poles and the Latvians, but also the Bundists voted against the Mensheviks on this question.



It is also noteworthy that all the national delegates adopted a conciliationist position at the Congress. In the case of the Poles, who on a number of questions supported the Bolsheviks, this attitude resulted from a conviction that the existence of opportunism within the Party was perfectly legitimate; such was the view of the Second International, and against it the Bolsheviks alone vigorously protested. The Bundists were no less opportunist than the Mensheviks. Their conciliationist non-factionalism was but a mask for factionalism in its worst form.

The question of armed insurrection was dropped from the agenda of the Congress.

About 150,000 organised workers were represented at the London Congress. It was a time in which the number of organised workers within the ranks of the Party had reached its maximum. The reaction, although already raging throughout the country, had not yet succeeded in destroying the Party organisation created during the rising tide of the revolutionary movement. The London Congress adopted new statutes, according to which delegates to Party congresses were to be elected one from every thousand Party members. But unfortunately at that time it could not be carried into practice. Very soon after the London Congress the Second Duma was dissolved. A period of savage reaction set in; the Party was brutally suppressed; the legal press was closed down.\* Ten years elapsed before the next Party congress was held.\*\*

\*Legal Party papers appeared sporadically. The reaction which followed the December uprising severely affected the Party machinery and such of its sections as had begun to creep out from concealment were again obliged to go underground. At the time of the opening of the First State Duma the Party had once more succeeded in establishing a legal political press, in addition to its illegal press. At the end of April 1906 the Bolsheviks published a paper called *Volna* [The Wave]; when this was prohibited, it was succeeded by *Vperyod* [Forward], this in turn was prohibited and was followed by *Ekho* [The Echo]. With the dispersal of the First Duma the daily revolutionary press came to an end, but was followed by weekly publications. For instance, in Moscow in the autumn of 1906 a weekly Bolshevik organ was published known as *Voprosi Dnya* [Questions of the Day], and when this was prohibited, it was succeeded by *Istina* [Truth]. With the opening of the Second Duma the legal Bolshevik press was revived and for a certain period several newspapers were published. But these papers ceased to appear after the dispersal of the Second Duma and from that time forth until 1912 the Bolsheviks were deprived of a daily Party press.

\*\*Among the Bolshevik delegates to the London Congress were: Lenin,

*Dissolution of the Duma, June 3, 1907*

'Hardly had the new Central Committee been formed when the Second Duma was dissolved. The immediate pretext for the dissolution arose from the demand of the government that the Duma should surrender the whole of the Social-Democratic fraction whose members had been accused of high treason. Since the Cadets found it inconvenient to surrender the Social-Democratic fraction immediately and there was accordingly some delay in fulfilling the demand of the government, the latter used this as a pretext to promulgate its Manifesto of June 3, which not only announced the dissolution of the Second Duma, but also introduced changes into the electoral law. The new law guaranteed a certain majority for the government in the next Duma under all circumstances. The dissolution of the Second Duma, which was accompanied by the arrest of the whole of the Social-Democratic fraction with the exception of those of its members who had managed to go into concealment, marked the turning point in the Revolution of 1905-07 and signalled its definite and final defeat.'

*Result of the Struggle for the Party*

The period between the December insurrection and the dispersal of the Second Duma (June 3) was marked by the progressive, although uneven, decline of the tide of revolution and the steady rise of counter-revolution. But during the whole of this

Stahn, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Tomskey, Yaroslavsky, Mikha Tsikhakaya, Lyadov, Bubnov, Spandaryan, Nakoryakov, Mandelstamm, A. Bogdanov, Stanslav Volsky, Desnitsky-Stroev, A. Schlichter and Alexinsky. Among the Polish delegates was Rosa Luxemburg. The Mensheviks were headed by Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod, Dan and Tsereteli. It should be stated that Trotsky, who had just escaped from exile, was also present at the Congress. While formally not adhering to any of the fractions, Trotsky on a number of questions sharply opposed the Bolsheviks and supported the Mensheviks.

Speaking on the report of the Duma fraction, Trotsky, turning to Tsereteli, declared that he [Trotsky] "was prepared to subscribe to the majority of your [*i.e.*, Tsereteli's] utterances." Tsereteli was the most definite representative of the Menshevik policy of the Duma fraction. In the same speech Trotsky declared that the tactics of the Bolsheviks were devoid of revolutionary initiative and creative force.

\*The majority of the arrested deputies were condemned to penal servitude and exile several months later and regained their freedom only upon the outbreak of the Revolution of February 1917.

period the revolution continued to fight for existence and was ready at any moment to pass from defence to attack. The distribution of political forces remained more or less what it had been during the high tide of revolution. The landlords' government, supported by a section of the bourgeoisie, strove to preserve and consolidate its rule in the country. The liberal bourgeoisie wavered between the government and the revolution. They endeavoured to secure concessions from the government, progressively moderating their demands and striving for a peaceful constitutional reform of the country which would not shake the pillars of the bourgeois system. The Bolshevik Party (which even while a fraction of a formally united party was in fact an independent party) headed the proletariat and fought for the overthrow of the government with the aid of the peasantry. The bitter war which the Bolsheviks waged against the Cadets during the whole of this period was in reality a war to gain the peasantry, and to a lesser extent the petty-bourgeois democratic elements of the cities, as revolutionary allies. The democratic parties which led the peasantry and the petty bourgeois democrats of the cities—the S.R.'s, Trudoviki and the Mensheviks—vacillated between the proletariat and the liberal bourgeoisie, between the Bolsheviks and the Cadets.

This vacillation was particularly marked in the case of the Mensheviks. The steady decline of the revolutionary wave was accompanied by a growing *rapprochement* between the liberals and the government, on the one hand, and between the Mensheviks and the liberals, on the other. At the same time, and as a direct result of this process, the cleavage within the Party between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks (who had formally united at the Fourth Congress) rapidly widened.

The main subjects of contention concerned the paths of development of the revolution, the allies of the proletariat, the attitude to be adopted towards the liberal bourgeoisie and the peasantry and the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution. It was around these questions that the struggle at the Fourth and Fifth Party Congresses had centred. It was already clear at the Stockholm Congress that the union was of a purely formal character. After the Stockholm Congress the difference between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks became still more acute. The

Bolshevik organisations were virtually governed by their own centre<sup>\*</sup> At the London Congress all questions were previously discussed by the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks separately before being raised at the plenary sessions of the Congress. At this Congress the Bolsheviks definitely set up their independent fractional centre. The more obvious it became that the counter-revolution had come to stay, the more definitely did the Mensheviks turn to the Right and the more insistently did they work to make the Social-Democratic Party an echo of the counter-revolutionary bourgeois Cadets. At the time of the Second Duma they definitely attempted to withdraw the demand for the confiscation of the landed estates. Their endeavours to secure the summoning of a labour congress were in effect an open attempt to liquidate the illegal revolutionary party. Frankly liquidationist utterances were heard at the London Congress. The resolution adopted by the London Congress regarding the ideological leadership of the trade unions by the Party and the desirability of establishing organisational contact between the Party and the trade unions was the signal for the opening of a bitter campaign against the Party on the part of the Mensheviks holding official posts within the trade unions. The half-hearted Menshevism of the period of the revolution, which was at times compelled to follow in the path of revolutionary events, began to assume the form of open liquidationism.

### *The Bolshevik Organisation Prior to the Triumph of Reaction*

The basis of the Bolshevik organisation at the beginning of the Revolution of 1905 was the Party committees in the towns, mainly selected and appointed from above. From these committees the organisation ramified into the districts and the factories. The lowest organisational nuclei were the factory circles, which also served as propaganda units. The propaganda circles were run by a large number of intellectuals, chiefly students. There were fairly strong organisations in certain of the middle and higher educational institutions. The technical section of the

<sup>\*</sup> At first the functions of centre were exercised by the Editorial Board of the *Proletary*, which began to appear in the summer of 1906 as the organ of the St Petersburg, Moscow and several other Bolshevik committees.

Party organisation was one of the most important, as well as the most secret and conspirative. As a rule, the Party committee in every provincial town had a small illegal printing press at its disposal with an adequate supply of type.

Such presses were capable of issuing periodical illegal leaflets to the number of five to ten thousand copies. Leaflets were also printed on hectographs and mimeographs. The central Party institutions possessed much more efficient presses capable of turning out illegal newspapers and journals. The famous press organised by L. B. Krassin in Baku printed *Iskra* in tens of thousands of copies during a period of several years. The Party committees as a rule consisted of professional revolutionaries—intellectuals and workers. Police spying, and the frequent raids and arrests, compelled the professional revolutionaries to be continually on the move. As a rule they did not work in one city more than about six months. A great number of the professionals were illegal workers, who had escaped from exile, lived on other persons' passports and were periodically subjected to imprisonment. In the years 1905-06 the Party organisation considerably expanded and was reconstructed on a basis of election from below.

In the large cities and big industrial centres the factory nuclei had already become the basis of the organisation. The factory committee was elected by the meeting of Party members, it guided the Party work in the given factory and maintained contact with the district committee. The district committees were elected by district Party conferences of delegates from the Party groups in the factories. The district conferences elected their delegates to the city conferences which met once every three or four months, discussed more important questions of policy and organisation and appointed a city committee as the supreme Party body. The committee consisted of professional revolutionaries and of workers from the factories. True, this Party structure, based on factory groups, was not consistently observed. Side by side with the factory nuclei, there were nuclei for individual professions of workers, chiefly artisans and workers in small shops. The student organisations, as formerly, played an important part. In the years 1905-06 the military and peasant organisations considerably expanded; they organised their independent meetings and conferences and published their

own literature During the first revolution the Party carried on very extensive work in the army. There were particularly strong Party organisations in the garrisons in Moscow and St Petersburg, in the fortresses of the Baltic provinces, among the sailors of the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets and in the sapper and artillery divisions. *The Barracks*, a paper issued by the St. Petersburg Committee of the Party enjoyed great popularity. The tsarist government was particularly savage in its persecution of the Party organisations among the armed forces. One of the important factors in the preparations for insurrection was the creation of fighting squads in which Party members received military training. The Party's fighting squads were active in the December insurrection. They continued to exist even after the insurrection and engaged in a number of partisan acts (such as raids on government institutions, attacks on troops, seizure of arms and ammunition, release of prisoners, expropriation of treasury funds, forcible seizure of printing shops for the purpose of setting up appeals, and so forth).

In the years 1905-07 the Mensheviks, steering a course for the cessation of the revolution and the adoption of European reformist methods, started a violent campaign against partisan activities and against militant action in general, which, however, did not prevent them from resorting to acts of expropriation and availing themselves of expropriated funds on several occasions, particularly in the Caucasus.

At the time of the London Congress the Party represented a large and widely ramified organisation, which in spite of its enforced illegal character embraced 150,000 members. This was twice the size of the membership in April 1917, when the Party had enjoyed two months of absolutely legal existence. But the ideological influence of the Party went far beyond its organisational structure. The majority of the workers regarded the Party as their own, supported its mass demonstrations and voted for it at the elections. Apart from the workers, the Party enjoyed the sympathies of hundreds of thousands of peasants, intellectuals, office workers and artisans.

In the Caucasus, the Ukraine, Latvia and Lithuania, and here and there in central Russia, the Party organisations had struck deep roots among the agricultural labourers and peasants.

Millions of leaflets and pamphlets, legal and illegal newspapers and books, setting forth the programme of the Party and the fundamentals of Marxism, were made available to the masses. In no country of the world, not even in the most advanced, had scientific Marxian literature at that time received such widespread distribution as in Russia in the years 1905 to 1907

### *Bolshevism and the Lessons of the First Revolution*

Savage as were the blows hurled at the Party and the working class by triumphant tsarism, the vast work performed by the Party in the years prior to the revolution and during the revolution itself was not in vain. It enabled the Bolshevik Party to bear the blows of reaction and to effect a rapid recovery immediately the tide of revolution began to turn. It prepared the Party for its great historical mission, the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In 1911, in a remarkable article entitled *The Historical Meaning of the Internal Party Struggle in Russia*, Lenin wrote of the political results of the failure of the revolution of 1905-06 as follows:

"Of all classes of Russian society, it was precisely the proletariat that in 1905-07 displayed the *greatest* political maturity. The Russian liberal bourgeoisie, which behaved in as vile, cowardly, stupid and treacherous a manner as the German bourgeoisie in 1848, hated the Russian proletariat *precisely because* in 1905 it proved *sufficiently mature politically* to wrest from that bourgeoisie the *leadership* of the movement and ruthlessly expose the treachery of the liberals. . . .

"... By the heroic struggle it waged during the course of three years (1905-07) the Russian proletariat won for itself and for the Russian people gains that took other nations decades to win. It won the *emancipation* of the working masses *from the influence* of treacherous and contemptibly impotent *liberalism*. It won for *itself* the hegemony in the struggle for freedom and democracy as a prerequisite for the struggle for socialism. It won for all the oppressed and exploited classes of Russia the *ability* to conduct the revolutionary mass struggle, without which nothing of importance in the progress of mankind has been achieved anywhere in this world

"*These gains cannot be filched from the Russian proletariat by any reaction, or by the hatred, abuse and malice of the liberals, or by the vacillation, shortsightedness or lack of faith on the part of the socialist opportunists*" \*

\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol III

In the old *Iskra* and in *What Is To Be Done* Lenin had drawn attention to the beginning of a new era in the history of capitalism and the class struggle of the proletariat, an era which was to be marked by the intense aggravation of class antagonisms and by a period of new revolutions following on a protracted period of political calm.

Leninism assumes consistent form as the revolutionary Marxism of the new era of imperialism and proletarian revolutions.

Leninism grew and developed on the experience of the class war, on the experience of a vast revolution, which embraced one-sixth of the surface of the globe and reverberated throughout the whole world, on the experience of the struggle of the international proletariat in all its forms.

In his *What the "Friends of the People" Are, etc.* and *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, and later in the old *Iskra*, Lenin had developed the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat in the impending revolution. In his *What Is To Be Done* he depicts the prototype of a new party, a party capable of conducting a revolutionary struggle (and not only parliamentary elections); a party definitely dissociating itself from the marsh of opportunism and from all who turn into that marsh; a party which demolishes the opportunist theory of spontaneity, and deals destructive blows at opportunism and conciliationism both within Russia and abroad.

The split with the Mensheviks at the Second Congress and the subsequent struggle waged against them marked the fight for a revolutionary party of a new type. It was a struggle against the policy and tactics of the Second International, which the Mensheviks, including the Trotskyists, like the *Rabocheye Dyelo*-ists and the Bundists, endeavoured to impose upon Russia. It is not surprising that in this struggle the Mensheviks were supported by the Second International, even the most Left of its elements (Rosa Luxemburg).

Bolshevism as a political current and as a Party exists since 1903. The Revolution of 1905-07 was an extremely important stage in its development.

It was during this period that Lenin in his pamphlet *The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* gave the most consistent and systematic shape to his doctrine of the hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolu



tion, of the growth of that revolution into a socialist revolution, of the allies of the proletariat (the peasantry in the first stage of the revolution, and the poor peasantry during the transformation of the revolution into a socialist revolution) and of the Party as the vanguard of the proletariat and the leader of the revolution.

"Marx and Engels presented the main outlines of the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat. Lenin's new contribution in this field was that he further developed and expanded these outlines into a symmetrical system of the hegemony of the proletariat, into a symmetrical system of proletarian leadership of the masses of the toilers in town and country not only in the fight for the overthrow of tsarism and capitalism, but also in the work of building up socialism under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is well known that, thanks to Lenin and his Party, the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat was skillfully applied in Russia . . ."

The high tide of revolution in the autumn of 1905 placed upon the Party the leadership of supreme forms of revolutionary struggle (the general political strike and armed insurrection), which were then applied for the first time in Russia on so large a scale and for the first time at such a comparatively high level of capitalist development. These forms henceforth became the subject of insistent propaganda by the Bolsheviks among the European parties.

But the high tide of revolution in the autumn of 1905 also revealed new revolutionary forms of government, unprecedented in history—embryonic state organs of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. These were the Soviets of Workers' Deputies and the allied Soldiers' and Peasants' Soviets. Of great importance for the subsequent development of Lenin's doctrine of the Party as the vanguard of the working class was the resolution of the Fifth (London) Congress on the subject of the trade unions and the Party leadership of the trade unions.

The theory prevailing in the Second International regarding the equality of trade unions and the Party had enabled the revisionists to make the trade unions their bulwark. They pursued their policy more openly within the trade unions than within the Social-Democratic parties. The Russian Mensheviks from the very beginning of the trade unions had attempted to direct their

\* Stalin, "Interview with the First American Labour Delegation in Russia," *Leninism*, Vol. I.

activities along the same lines. They preached neutrality but in practice used the trade unions against the Party in pursuit of their own ends. The London resolution was the starting point of a long struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks for the control of the trade unions.

But it was not only in the struggle against the Mensheviks, who from the very outset were the agents of the bourgeoisie within the Russian working class movement, that Bolshevism grew and developed and rallied the support of the proletarian masses.

In the Revolution of 1905-07 the Socialist-Revolutionaries enjoyed a certain amount of influence, particularly among the more backward sections of the workers, those still connected with the villages. That this influence at times reached serious proportions is borne out by the success achieved by the S.R.'s even in certain of the largest factories in St. Petersburg during the elections to the Second Duma in the spring of 1907.

Certain sections of the workers were drawn to the S.R.'s by their promise to give land to the peasants and by their revolutionary phrases, particularly when these revolutionary phrases were in striking contrast to the open opportunism of the Mensheviks which was repulsive to the workers. While in fact vacillating between the Bolsheviks and the liberals, the S.R.'s, like all petty-bourgeois revolutionaries, were great artists in revolutionary phraseology. But even this frankly petty-bourgeois party on certain questions, for instance the question of armed insurrection, adopted a more revolutionary position than the Mensheviks, who laid claims to being Marxists and representatives of the proletariat.

In this struggle against the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s, the Bolsheviks during the Revolution of 1905-07 had the majority of the working class on their side. But, as a proletarian party occupying a consistent position in the fight for democracy, they not only enjoyed the support of proletarian elements, but also attracted large numbers of believers in democracy, "fellow-travellers," as they were called, who were impressed by the resolute "plebeian" revolutionary determination with which the Bolsheviks attacked every survival of feudalism, beginning with tsarism itself, thereby, as the "fellow-travellers" believed, clearing the way for the protracted and unlimited domination of the bourgeoisie in a democratic republic. Such elements were not even averse to the temporary

hegemony of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

"Only in thee, worker, lies the hope of all Russia," wrote the decadent poet, Balmont, in the autumn of 1905.

What the democratic "fellow-travellers" of Bolshevism of course did not and could not understand was the Leninist doctrine of the transformation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the socialist revolution. There were within the Bolshevik ranks in 1905 and 1906 certain opportunist elements who adopted a conciliationist attitude towards the Mensheviks. They regarded formal union with the Mensheviks not as a manoeuvre for winning over the Menshevik workers, not as a means of isolating and ideologically defeating Menshevism, but as a means of creating a "decent" party on the European model, in which the most varied tendencies and currents, including out-and-out opportunism, could live peaceably side by side.

Lenin resolutely combated such tendencies both before and after the Third Congress. Nevertheless, they continued to exist. At the Fourth Congress certain Bolsheviks believed that unity had come to stay. On the other hand, certain sections of the Bolshevik Party displayed "Left" tendencies even during the first revolution. These tendencies were manifested in an undervaluation, and sometimes in a complete denial, of the value of work in the trade unions, in a failure to understand the role of the Soviets ("what is the good of them, when we have a party?") in attempts to confine the preparations for armed insurrection to the mere training of fighting squads, thereby ignoring the importance of mass agitational and organisational work.

With the onset of reaction the democratic "fellow-travellers" began to fall away from Bolshevism. Certain of them in later days strove very hard to distort the true character of Bolshevism in the years of 1905-07 and to confuse the Leninist doctrine of the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution.

The democratic "fellow-travellers" began to desert Bolshevism after the defeat of the revolution. But Bolshevism, the Marxism of a new era, the strategy and tactics of the proletarian revolution, emerged from the revolution ideologically developed and strengthened, prepared for new encounters and ready to wage a

bitter struggle against opportunism both in Russia and in the international arena.

When the Revolution of 1905-07 broke out the Bolsheviks were without supporters within the Second International. Even the most Left elements, not to mention such Centrists as Bebel and Kautsky, hastened to declare their support of the Mensheviks. The struggle fought by the Bolsheviks at the Third Congress met with the decided disapproval of the Second International. With respect to the furious dispute that had arisen over the question of tactics, whether, or not to participate in a provisional government, Kautsky with feeble irony declared that it was a dispute over the skin of a bear which had not yet been killed. The leaders of the Second International ascribed the struggle for the Party waged by the Bolsheviks against the bourgeois Menshevik agents within the Party's ranks to the backwardness and lack of culture of the Russian Social-Democrats. This original argument was subsequently used by Trotsky over and over again.

The unprecedented scale of the revolutionary struggle in Russia at the end of 1905 created a tremendous impression on the proletarian masses in Western Europe, particularly in Germany and Austria. It stimulated the activities of the Left elements within the Second International (Mehring, Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg and others). Even Kautsky, in January 1906, wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Prospects of the Russian Movement for Emancipation*, in which he advocated a revision of Engels' opinion that barricade warfare and armed insurrection were impossible under conditions of modern military technique. Kautsky was referring to Engels' Introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*, written in 1894, almost on the eve of Engels' death. But as it was later proven the passage in the Introduction referring to armed insurrection had been falsified by the revisionists. Thus, it was not Engels' opinions, but the opinions of the Second International ascribed to him, that required revision. But that was exactly what Kautsky had no intention of doing.

Stimulated by the impression and influence of great revolutionary events the Left elements within the Western European parties began to some extent to popularise the Russian experience among the masses, particularly the experience of the general political strike. But they did so rather in the way Rosa Luxemburg

understood these events and not in the way Lenin understood them.

But it is noteworthy that even among the Lefts of the Second International, not to mention Centrists of the type of Kautsky, the struggle of the Bolsheviks to create a party of a new type, a party purged of opportunists, did not meet with the slightest sympathy

## CHAPTER VI

### THE YEARS OF REACTION

*The third State Duma—Social character of the Regime of June Third—Fusion of tsarism and the bourgeoisie—The peasantry and the working class—The Third All-Russian Conference—The Fourth All-Russian Conference—The Central Committee transferred abroad—Liquidationism and otzovism—The Fifth Party Conference—The Bolsheviks expose the “Left” phrasemongers—Enlarged Editorial Conference of the “Proletary”—Formation of the “Vperyod” group—The fight for legal forms of activity—The Menshevik split—The January 1910 Plenum of the Central Committee—Liquidators violate the Plenum decisions—Lenin and Stalin oppose the liquidationist renegades—Plekhanov and the liquidators—The Bolsheviks save the Party*

#### *The Third State Duma*

Simultaneously with the dissolution of the Second Duma on June 3, 1907, a new electoral law was promulgated, so contrived as to guarantee the tsarist government that the new Duma would be tractable and compliant to its wishes. The representation of the landowning class was enormously increased at the expense of the peasants and the workers. The landlords secured more than half the number of places in the majority of the provincial electoral colleges.

Furthermore, the city *curia* was split in two so as to guarantee at least half the number of electors from among the merchants and houseowners, who were counter-revolutionarily inclined. In this way the government made sure of securing a majority in the Third State Duma. But the government was not content with amending the electoral law; it resorted to the mass arrest of revolutionary elements and the prohibition of trade unions, educational and other working class associations, which during the years 1906 and 1907 had enjoyed legal existence.

The composition of the Third Duma differed markedly from that of the First and Second Dumas. The majority of the First Duma consisted of Cadets, while more than one-third of the deputies of the Second Duma belonged to the Left wing; in which

a prominent place was occupied by the Social-Democratic fraction, numbering more than sixty deputies. In the Third Duma more than one-third of the seats were secured by the reactionary landowners. The dominant party in the Duma consisted of the Octobrists, who had the support of a considerable section of the big bourgeoisie, and whose policy was to support the Stolypin government. The Cadets, Progressivists, the Mussulman group and a Polish group formed an opposition which was loyal to tsarism. The extreme Left wing consisted of the Social-Democratic fraction (fifteen deputies) and the Trudoviki group (thirteen deputies).

The Social-Democratic fraction was thus reduced to a fourth of its size. The majority of its members were Mensheviks.

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### *Social Character of the Regime of June Third*

The Third Duma lasted the whole of its legal appointed span—five years. The tsarist government experienced no temptation to disperse such a Duma and collaborated with it in complete peace and harmony.

In this period the agrarian legislation begun during the interval between the First and Second Dumas was widely extended. This was in pursuit of Stolypin's agrarian policy, directed towards the encouragement of the rich peasants, or *kulaks*, by permitting them to withdraw from the village communes, acquire the best sections of the communal lands and to form their own farms on favourable terms. This policy was consistently pursued by the tsarist government and had the full support of the Duma. Its purpose was to win the support and sympathy of the kulaks, a purpose in which the government largely succeeded. It was, as the government called it, a policy "based on the strong." Thanks to Stolypin's policy, and also to the rise of the price of agricultural products in the world market, an intensive growth of capitalist elements in agriculture began, accompanied by an equally intensive process of differentiation of the peasantry. A portion of the estates of the landed nobility, about ten million hectares, passed out of the latter's possession. Of these lands, the greater portion fell into the hands of the kulaks, but a portion was also acquired by the middle peasants, who took loans for the purpose

on usurious terms from the Peasant's Bank and consequently fell into hopeless dependence on the bank.

The kulaks also energetically bought up the land shares of poor peasants who had abandoned the communes in order to migrate to the towns (during the years 1908 and 1910 more than one and a half million households, the overwhelming majority those of poor peasants, withdrew from the village communes).

Now, as heretofore, two paths of capitalist development faced the country.

The path most advantageous to the masses, which Lenin called the American path, involved the dissolution of the large agrarian estates and the development of a free peasantry of the farmer type on the lands of the village commune and the confiscated estates of the landlords.

The second path implied the transformation of the feudal landed estates into capitalist enterprises and the development of kulak enterprises by means of the expropriation of the poor and middle peasant masses. It was this path, the Prussian path, which the Stolypin government adopted.

This path was advantageous to the landlords and the kulaks; but for the peasantry it was a protracted and painful process accompanied by enormous suffering.

The development of commodity production and capitalism inevitably led to the abolition of the survivals of serfdom. As Lenin stated in his historic work *The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-07*:

"In this respect, Russia has only one path before her, that of bourgeois development.

"Yet there may be two forms of this development. The survivals of serfdom may fall away either as a result of the transformation of the landlords' estates or as a result of the abolition of the landlords' latifundia, i.e., either by reform or by revolution. Bourgeois development may pursue its course with the big landlord economy at its head gradually becoming more and more bourgeois, gradually substituting bourgeois methods of exploitation for feudal methods, it may also pursue its course with the small peasant farms at its head, which, in a revolutionary way, will eliminate the 'abscess' of feudal latifundia from the social organism and then freely develop without them along the road of capitalist economy.

"These two paths of objectively possible bourgeois conditions may be described as the Prussian path and the American. In the first case the feudal landlordism gradually evolves into bourgeois, Junker landlordism



which dooms the peasants to decades of most painful expropriation and bondage while, at the same time, a small minority of '*Grossbauern*' (big peasants) arise. In the second case there is no landlordism, or it is broken up by the revolution, as a result of which the feudal estates are confiscated and divided up into small farms. In that case the peasant predominates and becomes the exclusive agent of agriculture and evolves into a capitalist farmer. In the first case the outstanding feature of evolution is that serfdom grows into bondage and capitalist exploitation on the lands of the feudal lords—the landlords—the Junkers. In the second case the main background is the growth of the patriarchal peasant into a bourgeois farmer.”\*

Feudal agrarianism was being transformed into capitalist agrarianism; it took the “Prussian path” of bourgeois development by strengthening the kulak class and by the intense expropriation of the middle peasants and especially of the poor peasants.

But the problem of destroying the relics of feudalism, the prospect of an “American path” of development as a result of the establishment of a revolutionary democratic dictatorship and the nationalisation of the land, did not lose its urgency. It was dictated by the interests of the broad masses of the peasantry††

In addition to the measures taken to encourage the development of the kulak class, the government service became permeated by the big industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie undoubtedly gained closer access to government power during this period than was the case prior to the Revolution of 1905-07. As Lenin put it, the disintegration of the tsarist autocracy was a step towards its transformation into a bourgeois monarchy. This adaptation to the interests of the bourgeoisie was reflected in both the home and the foreign policy of the tsarist government.

In home policy it manifested itself in the intensified pressure brought to bear upon the working class, the abolition of the scanty labour protection measures the workers had hitherto enjoyed, the savage persecution of trade unions and other working

\* Lenin, “The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-07,” *Selected Works*, Vol. III

†† Attempts have been made in historical literature to substitute Lenin’s slogan of the transformation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution by the slogan of capitalist development along the American path. This is a gross distortion of Leninism. The abolition of the relics of feudalism undoubtedly cleared the way for capitalism. But the aim of the struggle of the working class, led by the Bolshevik Party, was to secure not the development of capitalism (that is the fundamental difference between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks), but the triumph of the democratic revolution and its transformation into a socialist revolution.

class organisations, and a widely developed attack against the working class movement generally. Mention must also be made of the spirit of savage nationalism that was freely encouraged during the period of the Third Duma. In order to place the Russian bourgeoisie and landowners in a privileged position in relation not only to the mass of the population of the oppressed national minorities, but also to the possessing classes of those minorities, the government, with the full support of the Duma, resorted to such measures as the practical abolition of the Finnish constitution, the separation of the province of Holm from Poland and the establishment in the Western provinces of *Zemstvos* with national *curiae*, which guaranteed the Russian landowners an artificial majority over the Polish. In foreign policy the *rapprochement* between tsarism and the bourgeoisie manifested itself in an endeavour to conduct an active imperialist policy in the interests of the bourgeoisie, in particular, an active struggle for foreign markets, rendered all the more urgent by the fact that the domestic market was hampered in its development by the existence of the large agrarian estates.

Following the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie turned its gaze towards the Near East, to Persia and Turkey (Constantinople). Perusing the records of the State Duma and the files of contemporary bourgeois newspapers, we are struck with the insistent pressure brought to bear by the bourgeoisie upon the tsarist government in order to induce it to adopt an aggressive foreign policy in the Near East, the Balkans, Asiatic Turkey and Persia, and to conclude an alliance with France and Great Britain. (The pure feudal nobility, on the other hand, sympathised with Germany.) It was this policy that led the "feudal military imperialism" of tsarism to participate in the World War of 1914.

### *Fusion of Tsarism and the Bourgeoisie*

Thus, during the existence of the Third Duma in matters both of domestic and foreign policy we observe a fusion of tsarism and the large capitalist bourgeoisie. The changing social structure of the government power, its bourgeois evolution, comprised that step towards the transformation of the tsarist government in-

to a bourgeois monarchy of which Lenin wrote. At the same time, the government manifested not the slightest tendency to neglect the defence of the interests of the feudal nobility. What it desired was to reconcile and harmonise those interests with the interests of the bourgeoisie and kulaks. Inasmuch as the government endeavoured to satisfy the economic interests of the bourgeoisie in its foreign and domestic policy, the bourgeoisie adopted a benevolent attitude towards the government, particularly in relation to its imperialist foreign policy.

While one section of the bourgeoisie carried its benevolence so far that its political organisation, *The Party of October 17*, comprised the government majority in the Third Duma, another section, the Left wing of the bourgeoisie, headed by the Cadets, also did its best to work in harmony with the government. The Cadets dissociated themselves more and more from the Lefts. They considerably modified the demands they had advocated in the First and Second Dumas, in particular rejecting the demand, so repugnant to the feudal nobility, for the compulsory alienation of the large estates even "at a fair price." But the endeavours of the Cadets to co-operate with the government manifested themselves particularly in the sphere of foreign policy. The Cadets began more openly and actively to support the foreign policy of the tsarist government; and if they criticised it, it was only on the grounds that it was not sufficiently aggressive.

This movement of the bourgeoisie and of the liberals to the Right exercised a definite influence on the sections of the intellectuals who were socially connected with the bourgeoisie. The result was the mass withdrawal of intellectuals from the revolutionary parties, while within the Menshevik party, which during the 1905 Revolution lined itself with the liberal bourgeoisie, and within which the intellectuals enjoyed great influence, a growing tendency towards liquidationism began. The Menshevik liquidators revised the old programme and tactical principles with the purpose of reconciling them to the regime of June 3. A similar process took place within the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.\*

\* The development of liquidationism was considerably more marked in the Socialist-Revolutionary Party than in the Social-Democratic Party, since the former was essentially a petty-bourgeois party closely identified with the big bourgeoisie and the kulak sections of the peasantry, whose interests the

Another manifestation of the crisis within the revolutionary parties was the development of anarchism, particularly in regions where a small artisan proletariat prevailed.

Certain active revolutionaries, disillusioned by successive failure in the political struggle, were driven towards anarchistic methods, the most prevalent form of which was at that time mere acts of expropriation, which sometimes degenerated into ordinary criminal robbery. Expropriation was particularly widespread in the Ukraine, the Western provinces and in Trans-Caucasia.

The government dealt with the perpetrators of acts of expropriation with the most brutal severity, resorting to courts martial and "Stolypin's neckties."

### *The Peasantry and the Working Class*

The peasant movement during the existence of the Third Duma was, as far as external manifestations were concerned, in marked abeyance. The kulaks were satisfied with Stolypin's policy and the opportunity it afforded them of buying up state and appanage lands and the estates of the nobility, and of plundering the lands of the village communes. Following the savage reprisals of 1906-07, the middle and poor peasantry abandoned the mass struggle for the time being; their economic warfare as a rule expressed itself in acts of incendiarism directed against the estates of the landlords and kulaks. But their attitude towards the government did not and could not change, for the government in its social and political character was essentially a government of the landed nobility. Half the land, about seventy million acres, was owned by thirty thousand individuals, while the other half was distributed among ten and a half million individuals. Heavy burdens were laid upon the working class: wages everywhere were lowered and the working day increased. The owner once again

agrarian policy of the government was designed to meet. The liquidationist movement within the Socialist-Revolutionary Party began even before the final collapse of the revolution and led to a split in that party and the formation of the People's Socialist Party. The latter endeavoured to adopt a position intermediary between the SR's and the Cadets and to adapt the SR programme to the Cadet programme by renouncing the demand for a republic and the confiscation of the large estates. Its one aim was to gain the right of legal existence. Lenin called the members of this Party SR. Mensheviks.

assumed arbitrary and uncontrolled power in the factories. Attempts at resistance on the part of the working class were sternly repressed, and strikes decreased in number from year to year.

The capitalist attack on the working class was favoured by the industrial crisis which seized upon the country soon after the collapse of the revolution. It began in the latter half of 1907 and continued throughout 1908, and only in the following year, as a result of the record harvest, were the first signs of improvement observed. The crisis hampered the economic struggle of the working class and, accompanied as it was by the severe reaction which followed the defeat of the revolution, led to a lull in both the political and economic struggle.

### *The Third All-Russian Conference*

Such in general and brief outline were the conditions in which the Bolsheviks were obliged to conduct their activities after the Fifth (London) Congress. That Congress had elected a Central Committee which, although it was not Menshevik, as was the case of the Central Committee appointed by the Fourth (Stockholm) Congress, nevertheless did not possess a definite Bolshevik majority.\*

The Central Committee had hardly begun its work when the *coup d'état* of June Third placed before the Party the problem of whether it should or should not participate in the elections of the Third Duma.

An All-Russian Conference of the Party was summoned at the end of July to discuss this question. This was the third conference of the Party, counting from the Tammerfors Conference. It was summoned in accordance with the provisions of the new

\* There were five Bolsheviks on the Central Committee: G. Goldenberg-Meshkovsky, Nogin, Dubrovinsky, Teodorovich and Rozhkov. The Mensheviks were represented by A. S. Martynov, Noah Jordania, B. I. Gorev and Noah Ramishvili, the Polish Social-Democrats by F. E. Dzerzhinsky and A. Warski, the Bund by Lieber and Abramovich, the Latvian Party by Herman (Danishevsky). The alternate members of the Central Committee elected by the London Congress consisted of V. I. Lenin, Shantser-Marat, M. N. Pokrovsky, Postalovsky (Vadim), A. Bogdanov, L. B. Krassin, A. I. Rykov, Lindov and Taratuta representing the Bolsheviks, Y. Martov, Khinchuk (Miron), Isuv (Mikhail), Chatsky, Garvy (Yuri) and K. Ermolayev (Roman), representing the Mensheviks, Tyszko (Yogiches) and Malecki representing the Polish Social-Democrats and Rosin and Bushevitz representing the Latvian Social-Democrats.

statutes adopted by the London Congress which enjoined the Central Committee to summon an All-Russian conference once every three months on the basis of one delegate for every five thousand Party members. The present Conference was attended by twenty-six voting delegates, fifteen of whom voted for the Bolshevik resolution and eleven for the Menshevik resolution.

The Mensheviks, of course, were unconditionally in favour of participation in the elections. The Bolsheviks were profoundly divided over this question. This gave rise to the first severe split in the Bolshevik ranks since July 1904. Only one of the Bolshevik delegates attending the Conference, Lenin, favoured participation in the elections, the remainder declared for a boycott (the Polish and Latvian delegates favoured participation).<sup>1</sup> But since the boycottists were in a minority at the Conference, they voted for the resolution favouring participation drafted by Lenin, and against the resolution of the Mensheviks. Lenin's resolution was adopted with the support of the votes of the Bolsheviks, the Poles and the Latvians. The resolution recorded that the situation in the country continued to be revolutionary and that the tsarist government had not succeeded in removing a single one of the antagonisms which had given rise to the revolution. The working class would continue its struggle; so also would the peasants until they secured land. Hence, the tactics of the Party must be based upon the expectation that the reaction would be followed by a new upsurge of revolution. But in the meantime reaction prevailed and would continue to do so for some time to come. The Party must face this fact and take advantage of the elections to the Third Duma, and of the opportunities offered by the Duma in order to strengthen its contacts with the masses. If, Lenin declared, the boycott of the First Duma was justified because of the certainty that it would never meet and would be swept away in the storm of revolution, such certainty could not be entertained in relation to the Third Duma. Reaction would prevail for several years, and during these years it was essential to take advantage of every legal opportunity to organise the masses around the Party, and in particular of the tribune afforded by the Duma. The resolution adopted by the Conference was framed in this spirit. Nevertheless,

<sup>1</sup> The leader of the boycottists at the Conference was A. Bogdanov.

a large number of leading Bolsheviks were in favour of boycotting the Duma, and it was only thanks to the persistent and systematic work of Lenin and his tremendous energy that his viewpoint in the end came to be shared by the great majority of the Bo'sheviks. Subsequent events fully bore out the estimate of the economic and political situation given by Lenin and revealed the futility of the hope the boycottists had entertained that a new upsurge of the revolution would sweep away the Third Duma.\*

The elections took place in an atmosphere of brutal reaction and were accompanied by a systematic attack upon the Party organisations. The enfeeblement of the Party organisation as a result of police persecution, on the one hand, and the mass flight of intellectuals and the growing apathy of large sections of the working class, on the other, had now become patent to all. This apathy had begun to affect even the more active and advanced elements of the working class. Nevertheless, in spite of the terror, the workers revealed their revolutionary mood at these elections. All the deputies elected by the workers to the Third Duma proved to be Social-Democrats.

### *The Fourth All-Russian Conference*

After the elections the Party was immediately faced with the problem of the tactics to be pursued by the Duma fraction. The

\* Shortly prior to the Conference a pamphlet was issued entitled *Boycott of the Third Duma* consisting of two parts: "Against the Boycott" written by Lenin and "For the Boycott," written by Kamenev

Comparing the conditions which existed in the summer of 1905 (on the eve of the Bulygin Duma) with those that existed in the summer of 1907, Lenin wrote:

"A constitutional monarchist turn of history was at that time but a police promise. Now it is a fact. Unwillingness to recognise this fact squarely would indicate a ludicrous fear of the truth. It would also be erroneous to regard the recognition of this fact as an admission that the Russian revolution was finished. The Marxist is obliged to fight for the straight revolutionary path of development when that fight is dictated by the objective situation; but, we repeat, that does not mean that we were not obliged to reckon with the zigzag turn that had already actually taken place. In that respect the course of the Russian revolution is already fully defined. At the beginning of the revolution we perceive the curve of a brief, but unusually broad and dizzy rapid rise. Then, beginning with the insurrection of December 1905 the curve shows an extremely slow but undeviating decline. At the beginning we have a period of direct revolutionary struggle by the masses and then a constitutional monarchist turn," (Lenin, "Against the Boycott," *Collected Works*, Vol. XII.)

Central Committee summoned the Fourth All-Russian Conference in November 1907. It was attended by ten Bolsheviks, four Mensheviks, five Bundists, five Poles and three Latvians. It is noteworthy that the proportion of Mensheviks had dropped considerably, even in comparison with the Conference held only four months previously. A large number of the organisations that had formerly supported the Mensheviks had now come under the control of the Bolsheviks, a result of the fact that the intellectuals, the majority of whom had supported the Mensheviks, and the less stable elements in general, were deserting the Party organisations *en masse*.

The Conference discussed the tactics of the fraction in the Third Duma. The Bolshevik resolution on this subject was adopted. It declared that two majorities were possible in the Third Duma: either a majority of Octobrists and Black Hundreds, or a majority of Octobrists and Cadets. Both majorities would defend the interests of their classes, that is, both would represent counter-revolution. It was the duty of the Social-Democratic fraction to wage relentless war on whichever of these majorities prevailed; under no circumstances must it consent to curtail its demands in concession to reaction, and its efforts must be devoted primarily to making use of the tribune afforded by the Duma for agitational purposes in order to expose to the masses the reactionary policy of the bourgeois parties, the government and of the Cadet "opposition." Like every Party organisation, the fraction must subordinate itself completely to the Central Committee and be guided by its instructions.\*

The Conference passed a resolution governing the contributions of Social-Democrats to bourgeois papers. By the time of the Third Duma every legal press organ of the Party had been suppressed. There existed only illegal publications, but systematic

Throughout the existence of all three Dumas a controversy was waged between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks as to the degree of independence to which the Duma fraction was entitled. Since in all three Dumas the majority of the Social-Democrats consisted of Mensheviks, it was to the advantage of the latter to grant the widest possible rights to the fraction and to render it virtually independent of the Central Committee. This was in complete accord with their general policy, shared by the revisionists in all European parliaments where there were socialist fractions, for the latter were a favourite field of action for opportunist parliamentarians. The Bolsheviks demanded the unconditional submission of the fraction to all decisions of the Central Committee.



attempts were made by the Mensheviks to make use of the bourgeois press for their anti-Party purposes. The bourgeois papers gladly placed their columns at the disposal of the Mensheviks (Plekhanov and Martov) and permitted them full liberty in their abuse and criticism of the Bolsheviks and of such Party decisions as did not meet with the approval of the Mensheviks.\*

The fact that the Mensheviks freely contributed to the bourgeois press was an open manifestation of their desertion to the bourgeois camp \*\* In view of the fact that this had become a common occurrence, the Bolsheviks at the Conference proposed and carried a resolution forbidding Party members to contribute to the bourgeois press articles bearing the character of inner-Party warfare, *i.e.*, of attacks of one section of the Party on another.

### *The Central Committee Transferred Abroad*

According to the Party statutes adopted at the London Congress, the Central Committee should have summoned a new conference within three months. But external political events were such that the next Party conference was held only a year later in December 1908. This was due to the fact that the Party ap-

\* Plekhanov published an article sharply criticising the election platform of the Party in *Tovarishch (Comrade)*, a paper published by a group of non-Party "Left" intellectuals closely associated with the Cadets

\*\* The disintegration which took place within the Menshevik camp following the triumph of reaction is vividly illustrated by the documents of the Mensheviks themselves "While the Bolshevik section of the Party became transformed into a phalanx of warriors cemented by an iron discipline and a single directing will, the Menshevik section revealed progressive organisational dissolution and apathy" This statement is made by Dan in his Afterword to the German edition of Martov's *History of the RSDLP*. And this is what A. N. Potresov writes to Axelrod on the eve of the Party Conference of November 1907: "Complete disintegration and demoralisation prevail in our ranks. Probably this is a phenomenon common to all parties and fractions and reflects the spirit of the times; but I do not think that this disintegration, this demoralisation have anywhere manifested themselves so vividly as with us Mensheviks. Not only is there no organisation, there are not even the elements of one. And this lack is even elevated by our Menshevik central control organs into a principle... Our solitary Mensheviks have spread themselves over the legal press, the bulky magazines (where their articles are sandwiched between pornography) and the radical yellow daily press where they compete with each other in compromising our political line. The picture is depressing, especially when it is borne in mind that it is peculiar to the Mensheviks, whereas the Bolsheviks preserve their purity and even intend at the forthcoming conference to raise the question of contributions to the bourgeois press" (*The Social-Democratic Movement in Russia*. Foreword by Lepeshinsky)

paratus, owing to the severe blows suffered from the reaction, lost its power of functioning properly. Towards the end of 1907 the Central Committee was obliged to abandon Finnish territory for Switzerland, since the repression exercised by the tsarist government, notwithstanding the existence of the Finnish constitution, rendered the continued residence of the Central Committee in Finland impossible.

The *Proletary*, the organ of the St. Petersburg and Moscow committees, which had begun to appear as an illegal paper in August 1906 and in practice served as the central organ of the Bolsheviks, was also transferred to Geneva. Notwithstanding the categorical behest of the London Congress, it was a long time before a central organ of the Party could be organised at all. It was not until February 1908 that the first number of the central Party organ, *The Social-Democrat*, appeared but publication was soon discontinued since its organisers were immediately arrested. The second number of *The Social-Democrat* was issued abroad and not before the beginning of 1909.

The Menshevik leaders also settled abroad. In February 1908 they began as a group of independent writers to issue their own organ, *The Voice of the Social-Democrat*, in Geneva. About the same time there began to appear in the city of Lvov, under the editorship of Trotsky, a paper called *Pravda*, serving as the organ of the Ukrainian Social-Democratic League (Spilka). The paper avowed a non-factional conciliationist attitude, which in fact was nothing but disguised Menshevism. Since, however, the leaders of Spilka supported the Mensheviks without any attempt at disguise, *Pravda* ceased to serve as the organ of Spilka and became the mouthpiece of an independent group headed by Trotsky.

### *Liquidationism and Otzovism*

Thus, the central leadership of the Party was once again transferred abroad. In Russia itself the tsarist secret police continued its persistent destruction of the Party organisation. And within the Menshevik ranks the tendency known as *liquidationism* became increasingly marked as a conscious and definite endeavour to conform to the Stolypin legal system, to renounce all revolutionary aims, to put an end to (liquidate) the old revolutionary tactics of the Party and the whole of its illegal organisation.

Reference has already been made to the agitation which the Mensheviks carried on in the autumn of 1906 in favour of a broad non-Party labour congress. Even at that time the idea was advanced of an amorphous, legal, non-Party mass organisation in open opposition to a militant, centralised, illegal party. The London Congress branded the proposal to summon a labour congress for the purpose of forming a new "truly labour party" as an anti-Party proposal. Following the Congress, a mass withdrawal of the Menshevik intellectuals from the Party organisations began. But not all the Menshevik intellectuals contented themselves with simply withdrawing from the Party. A section of them began to organise themselves outside the ranks of the Party. They directed their attention to such of the legal trade unions as still survived, educational societies, co-operative societies, and so forth, making use of these organisations and of their press for anti-Party purposes, and with the object of making them the centres of a new reformist party.

At the same time, in spite of the prohibition of the Ali-Russian Conference, the Mensheviks continued systematically to contribute to the bourgeois newspapers and to vilify the Bolsheviks in those organs.

The liquidationist current had assumed more or less definite form within the Menshevik ranks towards the end of 1908 and had secured the adherence of the leaders. The Bolsheviks energetically fought the Menshevik liquidationists as agents of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie within the working class. At the same time a movement began within the Bolshevik ranks, the adherents of which subjected to a "Leftist" criticism the position adopted by the main body of Bolsheviks in 1907.

At the Party Conference held in July 1907 practically all the Bolshevik delegates had declared in favour of boycotting the Duma, and it was only by energetic exertions that Lenin after some time succeeded in rallying the leaders to his own point of view: *Proletary*, the organ of the St. Petersburg and Moscow committees, and the central organ of the Bolsheviks, consistently advocated participation in the elections. It also insisted on the necessity for the existence of a fraction within the Duma which would act in accordance with the instructions of the All-Russian Conference and under the guidance of the Central Committee. But a section of the erstwhile boycottists were not satisfied

with this position. They considered the existence of a Social-Democratic fraction within the Duma as obnoxious, all the more since that fraction did not readily subordinate itself to the Central Committee and committed error after error. The onetime boycottists averred that the fraction brought more harm than good to the Party; they argued that the existence of the fraction inspired the workers with the hope that the Third Duma might win them certain advantages. Moreover, the Party was being diverted from the straight path of armed insurrection. Hence the demand for the recall of the fraction from the Duma. The *otzovists*\* were opposed to taking advantage not only of the tribune offered by the Duma, but even of other "legal opportunities" (the trade unions, etc.). They demanded that the Party should return to its pre-revolutionary position, failing to understand that the situation had changed and that the tsarist autocracy had taken a step towards its transformation into a bourgeois monarchy. They failed to understand that certain of the positions gained during the revolution of 1905-07, such as the Duma, the trade unions and the educational societies, had, in spite of police oppression, continued to survive and were attracting the more active elements of the working class. Ignoring these new forms, and endeavouring to limit the activities of the Party exclusively to preparations for insurrection, in spite of the absence of a rising revolutionary movement, the *otzovists* displayed all the marks of a typical "Leftist" sect, divorced from the realities of the situation. In a letter to Maxim Gorky, Lenin wrote of the *otzovists* as follows: "The tactics of keeping (in pickle) the revolutionary phrases of 1905-06, instead of adapting revolutionary methods to the new situation and the changed era, which demand different methods and different forms of organisation—those tactics are dead tactics"†.

One section of the former boycottists adopted this *otzovist* position. Another section called themselves *ultimatumists*. The difference between the *ultimatumists* and the *otzovists* was that while the latter demanded the immediate recall of the fraction, the former insisted that an ultimatum should be presented to it: should the ultimatum be rejected, the fraction should be immediately recalled. Lenin characterised the *ultimatumists* as shamefaced of

\* From the Russian word *otozvat*, to recall—*Trans*

† Lenin, "Two Letters to Maxim Gorky," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIV,

zovists. He considered it absurd to present the fraction with an ultimatum and demand that it should immediately put a stop to its errors. These errors were consistently criticised by the *Proletary*. It was the duty of the Party to strive by persistent and patient effort to enlighten the fraction and induce it to adopt the Party position.

But the majority of the Social-Democratic fraction within the Third Duma consisted of Mensheviks. How did Lenin regard that? The fact was that the majority of the Menshevik fraction consisted of workers. Lenin believed that the influence of the Party and of the working class electors, if that influence were brought to bear systematically and tactfully, but with due insistence, would ultimately bring the working class section of the fraction over to the side of the Bolsheviks. Lenin's tactics were not mistaken, and when the split of the Mensheviks into liquidators and Party-supporters took place, the majority of the Social-Democratic fraction in the Third Duma came out in opposition to the liquidators and continued to work in contact with the Bolshevik leaders until the expiration of the term of the Third Duma in the spring of 1912. The errors of the fraction required to be corrected by persistent educational work, but the otzovists regarded these errors merely as a justification of their own tactics of refusing to use the Duma tribune.

The otzovists and ultimatumists had the support of a section of the working class Party members in St. Petersburg. At one time they commanded a majority in the Regional Bureau of the Central Industrial region. In the Moscow organisation, a former stronghold of the boycottists, a stubborn struggle was waged throughout the year 1908 between the otzovists and the supporters of Lenin. In the summer of 1908 a city conference of the Moscow organisation adopted Lenin's position by a majority of eighteen to fourteen.

### *The Fifth Party Conference*

It was only with the greatest difficulty that the Central Committee succeeded in summoning the Fifth All-Russian Conference of the Party, which was held in Paris in December 1908. It was attended by sixteen delegates. The Mensheviks were represented by the Caucasus, which entrusted its representation to the Men-

sheviks residing abroad, in the person of Axelrod, Dan and Noah Ramishvili (Semyonov), a member of the Central Committee. In addition, there was a single Menshevik representative from the Ukraine, who arrived towards the end of the Conference. All the remaining delegates from the Russian section of the Party were Bolsheviks. In addition to the Russian section, the Poles and the Bundists were also represented at the Conference. Owing to police vigilance, the Social-Democratic Party of Latvia was unable to send its representatives.

The Conference of December 1908 adopted a resolution on the current situation and the tasks of the Party. The resolution was written by Lenin and contained a brilliant economic and political description of the current situation in Russia. It referred to the step taken by the tsarist government towards its transformation into a bourgeois monarchy; the *rapprochement* between the landed nobility and the bourgeoisie; the home and foreign policy of the tsarist government favouring the interests of the bourgeoisie; the swing of the liberals to the Right and their adoption of a counter-revolutionary position; the fact that the government had gained the support of the richer section of the peasants, the kulaks; the flight of the intellectuals from the revolutionary parties, the existence of the liquidationist movement and the necessity of waging merciless war against that movement.

The Conference adopted a resolution on the subject of the Duma fraction, pointing out the main errors committed by the latter and once more affirming the duty of the fraction to subordinate itself to the decisions of the Central Committee and work under its guidance. In a resolution which was rejected by the conference, the Mensheviks placed their chief hopes on the expectation that the Cadets and even the Octobrist bourgeoisie would desert the government. Dan recommended the Conference "not to push where it had suffered defeat," in other words, to renounce revolutionary tactics.

The Conference adopted a resolution on questions of organisation, in which a departure from certain of the democratic principles laid down in the statutes adopted by the Fourth and Fifth Congresses, at the time when the Party possessed broad mass organisations, was justified by the change in political conditions that had since taken place.

In 1908 the Party membership numbered not tens and hun-

dreds of thousands, as formerly, but a few hundreds, or, at best, thousands. It once more became incumbent to render the Party a thoroughly conspirative organisation and to restrict the former system of election from bottom up. The resolution of the December 1908 Conference re-established the right of committees to co-opt new members, and limited the principle of election.

The Mensheviks put up a desperate opposition to this resolution. In their paper they described it as a shameful resolution, since it violated the elective principle and returned the Party to the position of pre-revolutionary days. But it was the Menshevik campaign against the resolution, and not the resolution itself, that was shameful. The unlimited principle of election which the Mensheviks proposed despite rampant reaction, would have led to the complete destruction of the Party organisation by the tsarist gendarmes. In view of the existing conditions, the democracy proposed by the Mensheviks fully conformed to their fundamental line, namely to liquidate the Party. From the point of view of the Bolsheviks, organisational democracy was merely a means of maintaining contact with the masses, and was to be applied only in so far as the conditions permitted it. The Bolsheviks did not hesitate to curtail democracy when it was demanded in the interest of the very preservation of the Party organisation.

Thus, the Conference adopted the resolutions sponsored by the Bolsheviks. It was declared that the aim of the struggle of the Party and the working class was, as it always had been, "the overthrow of tsarism and the conquest of power by the proletariat, supported by the revolutionary sections of the peasantry."

This formula emphasised the leadership of the working class in the realisation of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry; it was not a denial of that dictatorship, as the Mensheviks endeavoured to assert. In this connection Lenin in his article *The Aim of the Proletarian Struggle in Our Revolution* wrote as follows:

"The proletariat 'rallying to itself' the mass of the peasantry . . . the proletariat 'leading' the mass of the peasantry—states the draft resolution of the Bolsheviks in 1906; 'the joint action' of the proletariat and the peasantry 'in the struggle to bring the democratic revolution to completion'—states the resolution of the London Congress. . . . Is it not obvious that the meaning of all these formulas is identical, that that meaning expresses the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the

peasantry, and that the 'formula,' proletariat *supported by* the peasantry *remains within the limits* of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry?"\*

The Mensheviks by this time had lost even formal contact with the Party; their comparative numerical strength within the Party organisations had become insignificant.

The Mensheviks steadily abandoned the Party for other fields. They left practically no mark on the resolutions adopted by the December 1908 Conference.

### *The Bolsheviks Expose the "Left" Phrasemongers*

The resolutions of the Conference were directed against the Menshevik liquidators. But they were also directed against the deviation which by the end of 1908 had taken definite shape within the Bolshevik ranks under the name of otzovism and ultimatumism.\*

The polemical war against the otzovists and ultimatumists in the columns of the *Proletary* and *The Social-Democrat* at the end of 1908 and the beginning of 1909 became steadily more acute.

The struggle was aggravated by the fact that during these years of reaction the campaign for the philosophical revision of Marxism begun somewhat earlier by a number of Party writers, headed by Bogdanov and Lunacharsky, now assumed a developed form. The sponsors of this movement rejected dialectical materialism, which comprises one of the foundations of the Marxian conception, and on which Marx and Engels themselves and the great Marxian theoreticians of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, such as Plekhanov and Franz Mehring, laid great emphasis.\*\* When the revisionists, on the threshold of the twentieth century, set about revising the fundamentals of Marxism, they also began with philosophical materialism. The revisionists adopted in place of the philosophical materialism of Marx the philosophical idealism of Kant, which served as a bridge for the religious proclivities of the bourgeoisie.

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol XIV

\*\* The otzovists were represented at the Conference by two delegates, Stanislav Volsky and Lyadov. Of the editors of the *Proletary*, Bogdanov (called in the Party documents of that period Maximov) was an ultimatumist, his views were shared by Krassin (Nikolayev) and Lunacharsky

\*\*\* Both Plekhanov and Mehring, it is true, were guilty of a number of lapses from the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels



Bogdanov and Lunacharsky and their followers now offered in place of materialism the *empirio-criticism* of Mach and Avenarius, which was also a variant of idealism. Bogdanov somewhat modified this philosophy and styled it *empirio-monism*. In a period of rampant reaction, the group of writers led by Bogdanov made the philosophical revision of Marxism their chief aim. Lenin vigorously attacked this philosophical revision of Marxism in his brilliant theoretical work *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Plekhanov also attacked Bogdanov; but here, as in his previous philosophical articles criticising Kant, Plekhanov committed a series of errors. Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* towers head and shoulders above Plekhanov.

"Lenin . . . himself undertook, in the realm of materialist philosophy, the very serious task of generalising all the most important achievements of science from the time of Engels down to his own time, as well as subjecting to comprehensive criticism the anti-materialistic currents among Marxists. Engels said that 'materialism must take on a new aspect with each new great discovery.' We all know that none other than Lenin fulfilled this task, as far as his own time was concerned, in his remarkable work, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. It is well known that Plekhanov, who loved to chaff Lenin for his 'lack of concern' for matters of philosophy, did not even dare to make a serious attempt to undertake such a task." \*

### *Enlarged Editorial Conference of the "Proletary"*

In the summer of 1909 an enlarged editorial conference of the *Proletary* was held, an event destined to play an important part in the history of the Party. It was in fact a Bolshevik conference to which representatives from the local Party committees were invited.\*\*

The main resolutions of the Conference dealt with the duties of Bolsheviks in the Party in face of the new tendencies which were endeavouring under a false flag of Bolshevism to revise the fundamentals of Bolshevism (otzovism, ultimatumism and god-creating).

\* Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism," *Leninism*, Vol. I

\*\* St. Petersburg was represented at the Conference by Tomsy, Moscow by Shulyatkov (Donat) who died in 1911 or 1912, and the Urals by Nakor-yakov (Nazar). Members of the Editorial Board of the *Proletary* and of the Bolshevik centre elected at the London Congress present at the conference were: Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bogdanov, Goldenberg-Meshkovsky, Shantser-Marat, Krassin, Rykov, Skrypnik and Taratuta (Victor).

These duties were outlined in the spirit of the resolutions adopted by the Party Conference held in December 1908. But far greater emphasis was laid on the necessity for dissociation from those Bolshevik elements whose views had been condemned in the decisions of the December Conference. The resolution declared that the tactics of the otzovists and ultimatumists amounted in practice to an opportunist concession to the spirit of apathy and passivity being displayed at that time by certain sections of the working class. Otzovism and ultimatumism were nothing but *liquidationism turned inside out*, they brought grist to the mill of the out-and-out liquidators. Beneath a play of revolutionary phrases they advocated refraining from work in the legally existing organisations, and this at a time when nine-tenths of the illegal organisations had been shattered. The illegal organisations had to be built up anew, and for that purpose it was essential to take advantage of every means of contact with the masses in general and with the vanguard of the working class in particular. Considerable opportunities were offered in this respect by the activities of the Duma fraction and by the work within the legally existing organisations, by means of which the Party influence could be brought to bear upon the active working class members of those organisations, and through them on the masses.

The Enlarged Editorial Conference of the *Proletary* proceeded to draw organisational conclusions from its political resolution. It was announced that the Editorial Board of the *Proletary*, in other words, the Bolshevik centre, henceforth declined all responsibility for the political utterances of Maximov (Bogdanov). In a supplement to the *Proletary* devoted to the Conference, Lenin gave the following description of the divergence of opinions among the Bolsheviks, which in the summer of 1909 led to the expulsion of the otzovists and ultimatumists from the ranks of the Bolsheviks:

"The majority of the Bolsheviks, sincerely inspired by the desire to offer direct and immediate battle to the heroes of June 3, were inclined to boycott the Third Duma, but were able very rapidly to cope with the new situation. They did not indulge in phrases learned by rote, but carefully scrutinised the new historical conditions, reflected on the reasons why events had gone as they had and not otherwise, and exercised their minds instead of their tongues, they carried on serious and consistent proletarian work and very soon came to understand the folly and wretchedness of 'otzovism.' Others seized on words, and of undigested words began to create 'their own line'; they began to cry

'boycottism, otzovism, ultimatism' and to substitute these cries 'for proletarian revolutionary work, demanded by the given historical conditions; they began to assemble a new faction from among the immature elements in the Bolshevik ranks. Go your way, friends! We did our best to teach you Marxism and Social-Democratic work. We now declare decisive and irreconcilable war both on the liquidators from the Right and on the liquidators from the Left, who are corrupting the workers' party by theoretical revisionism and philistine political and tactical methods" \*

The Conference adopted a resolution severely condemning what was known as *god-creating*, indulged in by Lunacharsky under the patronage of Bogdanov. Lunacharsky published a book entitled *Religion and Socialism*, in which he endeavoured to represent socialism as a form of religion.

Developing the philosophical revision of Marxism, Lunacharsky attempted to provide a religious foundation for socialism. For this he was vigorously criticised by the *Proletary*.

The resolution pointed to the growth of religious tendencies among the counter-revolutionary bourgeois intelligentsia with the decline of the social movement. These religious tendencies affected certain of the Social-Democrats and found expression in attempts to associate Marxism with the profession of religion and "god-creating" (particularly in the case of Lunacharsky). Such attempts amounted to a complete denial of the fundamentals of Marxism.

### *Formation of the Vperyod Group*

The ideological formulation of otzovism and ultimatism as an independent tendency very soon began to find organisational expression. In the autumn of 1909 the otzovists and ultimatists founded an independent Party school on the island of Capri in Italy. The lecturers at the school consisted among others of Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Alexinsky, Volsky, Lyadov and Gorky.

In conjunction with certain of the students of the school they formed at the end of 1909 a literary group called *Vperyod*, which issued its own platform and published a number of literary works. \*\* This group existed for several years. It professed to be

\* Lenin, "The Otzovist and God-Creator Faction," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIV

\*\* A number of important Bolshevik Party workers abroad adhered to this group, among them Pokrovsky, Menzhinsky, Desnitsky-Stroyev and Manuilsky.

the only true representative of Bolshevism and differed fundamentally from Lenin, the *Proletary*, the Bolshevik centre and *The Social-Democrat* on a number of questions.\*

Thus, at the end of 1909 we find that the great majority of the Bolsheviks rallied around Lenin, but at the same time a group of Bolsheviks who had been prominent in the past, members of the Central Committee, who had played an active part at the Third, Fourth and Fifth Congresses, and who were at one time the fellow champions of Lenin in the fight against the Mensheviks (Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and others), now had formed an independent organisation called *Vperyod*.

Regarding the platform of this organisation, Lenin at a later date wrote:

"In its pamphlet [*i.e.*, platform—*NP*] the new group gives a popular exposition not of all the propositions contained in that resolution [*i.e.*, of the Conference of 1908—*NP*] but only of a part of them, without grasping (perhaps even without noticing the importance of) the other part. The principal factors which caused the Revolution of 1905 continue to operate—states the resolution The new revolutionary crisis is maturing (clause f). The goal of the struggle remains—the overthrow of tsarism and the establishment of a republic, the proletariat must play the 'leading' role and must strive for the 'conquest of political power' . . . The state of the world market and of world politics renders 'the international situation more and more revolutionary'. . . . These propositions are explained in a popular manner in the new platform. . . .

"The new group *does not understand* the other points in the same resolution, does not grasp their connection with the remaining points, and especially it does not see their *connection* with that irreconcilable attitude to otzovism which is characteristic of the Bolsheviks and which is not characteristic of this group. . . .

"The autocracy has entered a *new* historical period It is taking a step towards its transformation into a bourgeois monarchy The Third Duma represents an alliance with definite classes The Third Duma is not a casual, but a necessary institution in the system of this new monarchy Nor is the autocracy's new agrarian policy casual, it is a neces-

\* The initiators of the *Vperyod* group consistently attempted to draw an analogy between their attack on Lenin and the Bolshevik centre at the end of 1909 and the attack in the autumn of 1904 of the group of Bolsheviks in Geneva on the compromising policy of the Central Committee, which led to the formation of the Bureau of the Committees of the Majority. That is why the group selected the name *Vperyod*, the name of the paper which the Bureau of the Committees of the Majority began to publish at the end of 1904. The *Vperyod*-ists for a long time attempted to claim that Lenin was betraying the traditions of Bolshevism, whereas they, the *Vperyod*-ists, were the standard-bearers of those traditions

sary, a bourgeois-necessary, and because of its bourgeois character a necessary, link in the policy of the new tsarism. We are confronted by a *peculiar* historical period with *peculiar* conditions for the birth of a new revolution. . . .

" . . . A special stage in the development of the autocracy has set in, in the development of the bourgeois monarchy, bourgeois Black Hundred parliamentarism, the bourgeois policy of tsarism in the rural districts, and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie is supporting it all. The present period is undoubtedly a *transition* period 'between two waves of the revolution,' but in order to prepare for the second revolution we must master the peculiarities of this transition, we must be able to adapt our tactics and organisation to this difficult, hard, obscure transition forced on us by the whole course of the 'campaign.' The utilisation of the Duma tribune, as well as of any other legal possibilities, is one of the humble methods of struggle which do not result in anything 'striking.' But the transition period is transitory precisely because its specific task is to prepare and rally the *forces* and not to bring them into immediate and decisive action. To know how to organise this work, which is devoid of outward glamour, to know how to utilise for that purpose all those semi-legal institutions which are peculiar to the period of the Black Hundred-October Duma, to know how to maintain *even on this basis* all the traditions of revolutionary Social-Democracy, all the slogans of its recent heroic past, the entire spirit of its work, its irreconcilability with opportunism and reformism—such is the *task of the Party*, such is the task of the present moment." \*

Together with the desertion of the otzovists and ultimatumists, the Bolsheviks were also deserted by a considerable number of their democratic "fellow-travellers." The latter's criticism of the Bolshevik tactics in the period of reaction was based on the point of view of "petty-bourgeois revolutionariness."

The petty-bourgeois nature of this "Left" criticism immediately betrayed itself, for it found a common tongue with the Right opportunists, the liquidators and of those whose tendencies were leading them to the position of the liquidators.

The characteristic of the *Vperyod*-ists was their open revision of the philosophical views of Marx. But Bogdanov, although in a more cautious and veiled form, also criticised the economic views of Marx.

"It is natural," Lenin wrote, "that in the bourgeois revolution petty-bourgeois fellow-travellers should have attached themselves to the Socialists. They are now falling away from Marxism and from Social-Democracy."

\* Lenin, "Notes of a Publicist," *Selected Works*, Vol. IV.

*The Fight for Legal Forms of Activity*

One of the arguments used by the otzovists against taking advantage of legal opportunities was that in any case the trade unions, clubs, etc., were being closed down by the police. And it is true that beginning with the latter half of 1907 the legal organisations of the working class were subjected to intense persecution. During the period 1907-12, 497 trade unions were closed down and 604 unions were refused registration, while more than 200 clubs, educational and cultural societies were also suppressed.

Under such circumstances, the arguments of the otzovists and ultimatumists could not but influence the inactive working class members of the Party, all the more since passivity could be masked by revolutionary phrases.

But in spite of the demoralising doctrines of the otzovists and ultimatumists, the Leninist core of the Bolshevik Party fought stubbornly to derive the fullest possible advantage from legal methods. By 1909 the majority of the trade unions in Moscow, where the Mensheviks, and later the liquidators, were always weak, had come under the control of the Bolsheviks. Intensive work was also carried on by the Bolsheviks in St. Petersburg for gaining legal opportunities in spite of the resistance of the otzovists and ultimatumists (at one time, in 1909, the ultimatumists even controlled a majority in the St. Petersburg Party Committee).

From 1908 to 1910, in spite of the otzovists, the Party several times organised working class delegations (in fact Party members) to various congresses (the Congress of People's Universities, the All-Russian Women's Congress, the Congress of Factory Doctors, the Anti-Alcohol Congress). The reports of their speeches resounded throughout the whole country and were of great agitational value.

The working class delegates at the Congress of People's Universities exposed the tsarist government's policy of suppressing all manifestations of cultural life and activity among the working class. They pointed out that without a radical change in external conditions, *i.e.*, without the abolition of tsarism, all attempts at raising the cultural level of the country would be futile. At the women's congress the working class delegation exposed bourgeois feminism, and argued that the emancipation of women workers

was bound up with the emancipation of the whole working class, and that working class women had nothing to hope for from bourgeois ladies. At the Congress of Factory Doctors the working class delegates described the frightfully insanitary conditions under which the workers lived, and pointed out that medical aid in the factory could not be organised in any way satisfactorily without a radical change in political conditions. At the Anti-Alcohol Congress the working class delegates argued that the fight against intemperance could not be dissociated from general social conditions, and that the fundamental causes of drunkenness lay in the terrible conditions under which the workers were compelled to live.

The appearance of the working class delegates at these public congresses offered a brilliant example of the possibility of making use of the legal possibilities under tsarism.

### *The Menshevik Split*

Simultaneously with the desertion of the otzovists and ultimatumists from Bolshevism a split was taking place within the ranks of the Mensheviks. Towards the end of 1908 various groups of working class Mensheviks in Moscow, and somewhat later in the Vyborg district of St. Petersburg, passed resolutions sharply condemning the liquidators and their anti-Party policy. Plekhanov, who had hitherto occupied an extreme Right position among the Mensheviks, now realised whither liquidationism was heading and himself began to turn towards the Left. He bluntly dissociated himself from the prevailing views of the Mensheviks on questions of organisation, retired from the Editorial Board of *The Voice of the Social-Democrat* and began once more to issue his own illegal journal entitled *The Diary of a Social-Democrat*,\* in which he conducted a vigorous controversy against the liquidators and called upon all Menshevik Party supporters who recognised the necessity for an illegal organisation to rally together.\*\*

\* The first numbers of this journal were issued by Plekhanov in the years 1905-07 when he was still in the ranks of the Mensheviks

\*\* Plekhanov attacked not only the liquidationist organisational tendencies of the Mensheviks, but also their attempt to discountenance the old guiding principle of Russian Social-Democracy, a principle which, at least openly, they had not dared to deny during the Revolution of 1905-07, viz, the principle of the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution. This attempt was made

But while the Menshevik Party-supporters sharply disclaimed the liquidators, and Plekhanov began to publish his independent journal, the official organ of the Mensheviks, *The Voice of the Social-Democrat*, under the guidance of Dan, Axelrod and Martov, drew ever closer to the point of view of the liquidators and more and more openly associated themselves with the attacks which the latter levelled at the Party. Trotsky's *Pravda* was transferred from Lvov to Vienna, where it continued to advocate its independent line on questions of policy and organisation, representing it as a non-factional line, whereas it was in fact a typical centrist line.

As Stalin in his *Problems of Leninism* states:

"Centrism is a political conception. Its ideology is one of adaptation, of subordination of the interests of the proletariat to the interests of the petty bourgeoisie in the same party. This ideology is alien and contrary to Leninism."

### *The January 1910 Plenum of the Central Committee*

The Bolsheviks fought on two fronts: on the one hand against the Menshevik liquidators and the followers of Trotsky, who had adopted a centrist position, and on the other, against the "liquidators on the Left." Within the Bolshevik Party a group of conciliationists was formed, who endeavoured to unite the Bolsheviks and the anti-Party tendencies within one party. The last plenary session of the Central Committee elected at the London Congress was held at the beginning of 1910 and was dominated by the influence of those who favoured union. The London Congress had enjoined the summoning of conferences every three months with the provision that in the intervals the Central Committee was to function uninterruptedly. A conference was held immediately after the Congress, and another three months later; but the following conference was held only at the end of 1908, whereas in 1909 not a single conference could be summoned. It became increasingly difficult to summon not only conferences, but

by Potresov in the first volume of a symposium which the Mensheviks began to publish under the title of *The Social Movement in Russia at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*. Because of this profound disagreement with Potresov's article Plekhanov retired from the Editorial Board of the symposium. But while he attacked Potresov, Plekhanov presented the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat in that distorted and limited form in which it was advocated by the Emancipation of Labour Group.



even plenary sessions of the Central Committee. A number of the members and alternate members of the Central Committee elected at the London Congress had retired from the Party; in part they were replaced, but in part their positions remained vacant.<sup>1</sup>

The adoption of the liquidationist position by the Mensheviks had become ever more direct and unconcealed, and their expulsion from the Party had become an urgent political and organisational necessity. This, however, was still not understood even by certain Bolshevik members of the Central Committee. At the last plenary session of the Central Committee elected by the London Congress held in January 1910, they attempted to reach an understanding with the Mensheviks.<sup>2 3</sup>

The Plenum was also attended by representatives of all the existing literary groups, among them *Vperyod*, *Pravda* (Trotsky's group) and Plekhanov's group. Then, as now, conciliationism served as a disguise for opportunism.

After a detailed discussion, which aroused a stubborn struggle between the Bolsheviks and the liquidators, and was accompanied by the waverings and vacillations of the conciliators, the Plenum succeeded in adopting a resolution for which all present voted.

But the resolution was of too elastic a character. It condemned the liquidators in a way which permitted the latter to ignore the fact that the condemnation was levelled at them. With equal diplomacy it condemned the otzovists and ultimatumists. While not referring to otzovism and liquidationism as such, the resolution qualified them as manifestations of bourgeois influence over the proletariat. Not only Lenin, but even Plekhanov, was dissatisfied with so vague a formulation of the Plenum resolution.

Lenin insistently demanded the inclusion of a point declaring the necessity for a fight on two fronts, against the liquidators and against the otzovists, but his proposal was rejected with the help of the vote of the conciliators.

\* On the grounds of the weakness of the Central Committee, the Mensheviks in August 1908 moved a proposal to dissolve the Central Committee and appoint an information bureau in its place.

\*\* Among the Bolshevik conciliators were Innokenty (Dubrovinsky), Lyova (M. K. Vladimirov), Makar (V. P. Nogin), A. I. Rykov, Mark (Lyubimov), Sokolnikov, Lozovsky, and Goldenberg-Meshkovsky. L. B. Kamenev at the plenary session of the Central Committee supported the conciliators on a number of questions in opposition to Lenin.

Following the adoption of the main resolutions the Plenum of the Central Committee resolved, first, to dissolve all factional groups, and, secondly, to discontinue the Bolshevik *Proletary* and the Menshevik *Voice of the Social-Democrat*. The Bolsheviks declared that they would close down the *Proletary* immediately, the Mensheviks promised to close down their own organ in the near future. Two Bolsheviks were appointed to the Editorial Board of the central organ of the Party, Lenin and Zinoviev, and two Mensheviks, Martov and Dan; the fifth member elected to the Editorial Board was the Polish Social-Democrat, Warski. Moreover a *Discussion Sheet* was instituted in connection with the central organ, open to contributions from representatives of all currents, even those differing from the Party line. It was decided to grant Trotsky's paper, *Pravda*, a subsidy out of Party funds and to delegate a representative of the Central Committee to its Editorial Board. The Plenum decided to establish the seat of the Central Committee in Russia, while for the conduct of the foreign work of the Party a Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee was to operate abroad. This body was to be resident abroad and was known as the Foreign Bureau. It consisted of representatives of the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Poles, Bundists and Latvians. Finally, all factional centres were charged to transfer their funds to the general Party treasury.

### *Liquidators Violate the Plenum Decisions*

The edifice of peace was, however, erected on a very insecure foundation. Within a few weeks it collapsed like a house of cards. First, the Menshevik alternate members of the Central Committee (Mikhail, Yurii and Roman), who were to have joined the Russian Bureau, categorically declined to do so, declaring that the existence of the Central Committee and of all illegal organisations in general was objectionable and harmful. The reason for refusing to join the Central Committee was frankly a liquidationist one. Furthermore, sixteen active Mensheviks in Russia published a letter in *The Voice of the Social-Democrat* (which still continued to appear), in which they assumed responsibility for the political and organisational policy of the liquidators. This amounted to an open declaration of war on the Party.

At the same time a legal Menshevik journal, *Nasha Zarya* (*Our Dawn*), began to appear in St. Petersburg, in the first number of which Potresov (Starover) printed an article of a definitely liquidationist character entitled *Why Trifles Triumphed*. He argued that there was nothing to liquidate, since no party existed anyway. Similarly, another legal journal, *Vozrozhdeniye*, instituted by the Mensheviks in Moscow, argued in every manner and form that the old Party had died and would never be revived, that illegal work was reactionary and must not be resumed, that the finest elements were deserting the Party, and so forth. At the same time, Larin, Piletsky, and others, in the pages of *Vozrozhdeniye* and *Nasha Zarya*, began to argue with increasing frankness and pointedness that the bourgeois revolution in Russia had been fully accomplished, that "October 1905 was not on the order of the day," that the working class must organise not for revolution and not in expectation of revolution, but merely for the defence of its immediate interests and in legal ways, that what was needed was not hegemony, but a class party, a legal reformist party, which must be created in place of the old Party, now liquidated.

### *Lenin and Stalin Oppose the Liquidationist Renegades*

In the liquidation of the fundamental programme and tactical principles of the Party, the leader of the Caucasian Mensheviks, Noah Jordania, went to greater lengths than any of the others. He was exposed by Stalin in a "Letter from the Caucasus," printed in *Discussion Sheet* (a supplement to the central organ of the Party, *The Social-Democrat*), No. 2 of June 7, 1910.

"The author [of the articles which appeared in the Georgian paper *Azri*, i.e., Noah Jordania—*N.P.*]," Stalin wrote, "undertakes a 'reevaluation of values' and comes to the conclusion that the Party (and especially the Bolsheviks) has fallen into error in regard to certain principles of its programme, and especially of its tactics. In the opinion of the author we must 'fundamentally change the whole tactics of the Party' in order to make possible 'a union of the forces of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat' as 'the sole pledge of the victory of the revolution. 'The struggle of the proletariat alone, or of the bourgeoisie alone, will never smash the reaction. . . . The defeat of the reaction, the conquest of a constitution and the realisation of the latter depends on the conscious union of the forces of the bourgeoisie and proletariat and their direction towards a common aim'; moreover, 'the proletariat must not allow its uncom-

promising spirit to enfeeble the general movement' But since the 'immediate demand of the bourgeoisie can be only for a moderate constitution' it is obviously the duty of the proletariat to abandon its 'radical constitution,' that is, if it does not wish to enfeeble the common movement by its uncompromising spirit and jeopardize 'the conscious direction of the forces of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat towards one common aim', in other words, if it does not wish to make way for the triumph of counter-revolution."

Stalin goes on to say:

"In particular, he [*i.e.*, Noah Jordania—*N.P.*] attacks the well-known formula of Plekhanov (*viz.*, that the revolution in Russia will triumph as a working class movement, or not at all), identifies it with the principle of the hegemony of the proletariat and comes to the conclusion that it does not bear criticism. He proposes to replace this formula by the new (or old!) theses respecting the union of the forces of the bourgeoisie and proletariat in the interests of 'the common movement' and of 'one common aim.' Listen to this!

"The thesis regarding the leading role of the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution is borne out neither by the theories of Marx nor by the historical facts."

"The less intense the class war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the more victorious will be the bourgeois revolution, provided, of course, that other conditions are equal."

"The principle, borne out by the whole experience of our revolution," Stalin continues, "namely, that the triumph of the revolution will be the more complete the more definitely the revolution is based on the class struggle of the proletariat, leading the poor peasants against the landlords and the liberal bourgeoisie—this principle has remained for our author a book with seven seals. It is in 'the union of the forces of the proletariat with the forces of the bourgeoisie' that Comrade An [*i.e.*, Jordania—*N.P.*] sees 'the only pledge of the triumph of the revolution.'"

"The moderate Cadet bourgeoisie, and its moderate monarchist constitution are what will save our revolution, it appears

"But the peasantry," asks Comrade Stalin, "what is its part in the revolution? 'Of course,' our author declares, 'the peasantry intervenes in the movement . . . but the decisive role will be played by only two modern classes—the moderate bourgeoisie and the proletariat.'"

"In a word," Stalin sums up, "in place of the leadership of the proletariat with the following of the peasants, we have the leadership of the Cadet bourgeoisie, leading the proletariat by the nose. Such are the 'new' tactics of the Tiflis Mensheviks. It is not, in our opinion, necessary to expose this puerile liberal trash in detail. All that is required is to note that the 'new' tactics of the Tiflis Mensheviks amount to a liquidation of the tactics of the Party which have been corroborated by the revolution, a liquidation demanding the transformation of the proletariat into the tail-end of the moderate Cadet bourgeoisie."

In reference to the struggle waged by the Party against the renegade liquidators in defence of the hegemony of the proletariat, Lenin in 1911 wrote:

"As the only completely revolutionary class of modern society it [i.e., the proletariat—*NP*] must be the leader and hegemon in the struggle of the whole people for a complete democratic revolution, in the struggle of *all* toilers and exploited against the oppressors and exploiters. The proletariat is revolutionary only to the extent that it realises and carries this idea of hegemony into effect."

As to the formula of the liquidators regarding the renunciation of hegemony, Lenin writes:

"... it is a formula of utter renegacy. . . while being a renunciation of the revolution in general, it is particularly intended as a renunciation of that which was most abhorrent to the liberals during 1905-07, namely, the fact that the proletariat *wrested* from the liberals the leadership of the masses of the people (and particularly of the peasantry) in the fight for a complete democratic revolution."\*

There were former Bolsheviks, for instance V. Bazarov (subsequently to become a wreckers), who argued that while it is true that the hegemony actually existed in 1905, now, with the onset of the reaction, it had not only disappeared but had become transformed into its opposite.

Lenin invited Bazarov to consider the attitude of the peasant deputies in the Third Duma towards the working class deputies.

"A simple conjunction of the indisputable facts of their political behaviour during these three years, a simple comparison of their parliamentary motions with the motions of the Cadets, let alone a comparison of their political utterances in the Duma with the living conditions of broad sections of the population during this period, prove in the most incontestable fashion that the hegemony is a fact even now."

The wave of liquidationism was not stemmed by the resolution of the Plenum formally condemning liquidationism. The liquidationists, relying on the support of the conciliationist elements, developed a still more unabashed campaign against the Plenum. It was in such circumstances that the attempt had to be made to carry the Plenum resolution into effect in Russia.

When the representatives of the Central Committee, Nogin and Goldenberg-Meshkovsky, arrived in Moscow to look for Menshe-

\* Lenin, "Reformism and the Russian Social-Democracy," *Collected Works*, Vol. XV.

viks who would consent to accept membership of the Central Committee, they continued to seek for them until they themselves were arrested. The Mensheviks did not discontinue *The Voice of the Social-Democrat*, their pretext being that their liquidationist articles were not published in the central organ, but were consigned to the *Discussion Sheet*. Indeed, under pressure of the liquidationists within Russia, the editors of *The Voice of the Social-Democrat* intensified the controversy against the Party.

### *Plekhanov and the Liquidators*

Thus the attempt at unity ended in failure. The conflict was renewed with redoubled energy. A number of new factions and groups arose. A conciliationist group was formed within the Bolshevik centre which regarded Lenin's tactics as too drastic and considered it expedient for the Bolsheviks to make concessions to the liquidationist elements. There was also a group of Menshevik Party-supporters, who, while combating the liquidators, were nevertheless not in complete solidarity with the Bolsheviks. This group was headed by Plekhanov.<sup>\*</sup>

What was the character of the group of Menshevik Party-supporters headed by Plekhanov? They represented a reaction of the revolutionary elements among the Mensheviks against the open adoption of liquidationism by the main body of Mensheviks, against their renunciation of the existing Party, their revision of its fundamental programme and tactical principles, their endeavour to create a new Stolypin labour party and their frank abandonment of Marxism for liberalism.

Even in the first revolution the Mensheviks had revealed themselves as out-and-out opportunists and agents of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement. But under the pressure of the masses they were often in practice compelled to follow the lead of the Bolsheviks, and so were forever oscillating like a pendulum between Bolshevism and liberalism.

"The tragi-comedy of Menshevism lies precisely in the fact that at the time of the revolution it had to accept theses which were incompatible with liberalism."<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> In 1910 Plekhanov was an active contributor to the Party central organ, writing an article for nearly every number.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Lenin, "The Historical Meaning of the Internal Party Struggle in Russia," *Selected Works*, Vol. III.

Lenin was referring to the Mensheviks' formal adoption of the demand for the confiscation of the landed estates.

The concessions made by the Mensheviks to the Bolsheviks during the first revolution were due to the fact that the bourgeoisie had not yet finally turned its back on the revolution and still to a certain extent speculated on a mass revolutionary movement, as though declaring, "You had better meet our demands, otherwise *they* might shoot."

But the situation changed after the revolution, as Lenin pointed out in April 1914 in his preface to the symposium *Marxism and Liquidationism*.

"To compare present-day liquidationism, which has since then shifted a whole mile to the Right, which has left the Party and shaken the dust of 'illegality' from its feet, which has consolidated itself into a solid anti-Party centre of legal journalists, of liberal and liquidationist newspapers, and whose adherents have been removed from their posts by the workers in every working class organisation and society—to compare this liquidationism with the Menshevism of 1903-07 is to permit oneself to be blinded and deafened by old titles and sobriquets, by old high-sounding phrases, and reveals an utter failure to comprehend the decade of evolution of class and party relations in Russia. The liquidationism of 1914 is what the group of the newspaper *Tovarishch* was in 1907." \*

In the years following the revolution Menshevism underwent the natural evolution which was undergone by bourgeois liberalism. It was this evolution which brought the main body of the Mensheviks to the liquidationist position.

This evolution was accompanied by a peculiar form of "self-criticism," by a critical revision of the tactics which the Mensheviks were obliged to adopt during the first revolution under the pressure of the Bolsheviks, and by a renunciation of these tactics in the form of a still more open adaptation to bourgeois liberalism. There was, of course, a logic in this evolution of Menshevism towards liquidationism.

And when the so-called Menshevik Party-supporters, in order to preserve the Menshevik traditions, attempted to draw a distinction between the Menshevism of the present day—liquidationism—and the Menshevism of old, it was an attempt doomed to failure from the outset, for, as a matter of fact, the liquidators

\*\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XVII.

were the most consistent standard-bearers of the Menshevik traditions.

Plekhanov's defence in 1910 and 1911 of the idea of hegemony of the proletariat and of the necessity for an illegal party was undoubtedly convincing to those workers who had in 1905-07 taken the revolutionary phrases of the Mensheviks seriously, and who now observed with profound indignation the Mensheviks' renunciation of those phrases and their revelation of themselves as frank opportunists.

But to reconcile a defence of the hegemony of the proletariat and of an illegal party after the revolution with a defence in principle of the Menshevik attitude towards bourgeois liberalism in 1905-07; to advocate that attitude now; to oppose the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry and to renounce the political conquest of power by the proletariat—was to involve oneself in hopeless and irreconcilable contradictions. Yet such was the task that Plekhanov took upon himself. The revolutionary Menshevism which he preached was as unfeasible as wet fire or dry water.

For a very brief period the Menshevik Party-supporters played a useful role as a means of exposing the liquidators, and as a spring-board for a section of the working class Mensheviks in their transition to Bolshevism. For that reason the alliance which Lenin concluded with Plekhanov against the liquidators was justified. The alliance also played its part in the exposure of the philosophical revision of Marxism by the otzovist-ultimatumist group of the *Vperyod*.

The alliance, however, was of brief duration. When Plekhanov perceived that the Party, revived in its fight against the liquidators, would be a monolithic Bolshevik party, demanding of him a complete and unconditional break with opportunism, he found that break beyond his strength. And after a certain period of closer association with the Bolsheviks Plekhanov once again halted half way, until at last the world imperialist war cast him once and for all into the camp of the social-chauvinists hostile to the working class.

The Polish and Latvian Parties and the Bund gradually withdrew from the general Russian movement, retired into their shells and continued what was in fact an independent existence. There



was also the independent "non-factional" group of Trotsky,\* connected with the paper *Pravda*. There was also the *Vperyod* group, carrying on a separate existence with its own independent press. But of the numerous societies, groups and colonies existing abroad, only two enjoyed any serious political weight in Russia and possessed organisational connections worth speaking about, namely, the main body of the Bolsheviks, grouped around Lenin, and the main body of the Mensheviks, issuing their paper abroad, *The Voice of the Social-Democrat*, and connected with a number of writers and officials of legally-existing organisations who shared the point of view of the liquidators. The majority of the Party organisations in Russia itself had been destroyed. Practically the whole body of active workers during the years 1906-10 suffered arrest, exile, or imprisonment. Proof of membership in the Party (which was punishable under Clause 102 of the Criminal Code) involved as a minimum penalty exile for life to Siberia and deprivation of all civic rights (flight from exile was punishable by penal servitude). When membership in the Party could not be proven by the tsarist courts, long terms of imprisonment in a fortress were usually inflicted, or else the accused was summarily exiled to distant Northern Siberia without formal sentence of court. *Agents-provocateurs* abounded. The mass movement of the working class fell into almost complete abeyance. But towards the end of 1910, and particularly in 1911, there began a gradual revival of the mass movement and a gradual restoration of the illegal Party organisation.

### *The Bolsheviks Save the Party*

The period from the end of 1907 to 1910 was a dark and difficult one in the history of the Bolshevik Party. But the Bolsheviks, faithful to their political and organisational traditions, managed to survive this period, to retire in comparatively good order and to preserve their main forces for a new struggle.

Around the Bolsheviks was grouped practically all that remained of the old illegal organisation. Referring to this period, Lenin in 1920, in his "*Left Wing*" *Communism, an Infantile Disorder* wrote:

\* Other members of this group were Semkovsky, Joffe, M. Uritsky and Skobelev (subsequently a member of the Fourth Duma).

"Tsarism is victorious. All the revolutionary and opposition parties have been defeated. Depression, demoralisation, splits, discord, renegacy and pornography instead of politics. There is an increased drift toward philosophic idealism, mysticism serves as a cloak for counter-revolutionary moods. But at the same time, it is precisely the great defeat that gives the revolutionary parties and the revolutionary class a real and very useful lesson, a lesson in historical dialectics, a lesson in the understanding and in the art of carrying on the political struggle. One recognises one's friends in time of misfortune. Defeated armies learn their lesson well.

"Victorious tsarism is compelled speedily to destroy all remnants of the pre-bourgeois, patriarchal mode of life in Russia. Russia's development along bourgeois lines proceeds with remarkable rapidity. Illusions, extra-class and above-class illusions, illusions as to the possibility of avoiding capitalism, are scattered to the winds. The class struggle manifests itself in a new and more distinct form.

"The revolutionary parties must complete their education. They have learned to attack. . . They must understand—and the revolutionary class by its own bitter experience learns to understand—that victory is impossible without having learned both how to attack and how to retreat correctly. Of all the defeated opposition and revolutionary parties the Bolsheviks effected the most orderly retreat, with the least loss to their 'army,' with the nucleus of their party best preserved, with the fewest splits (in the sense of deep, irremediable splits), with the least demoralisation, and in the best condition to renew work on the broadest scale and in the most correct and energetic manner. The Bolsheviks achieved this only because they ruthlessly exposed and drove out the revolutionary phrasemongers, who refused to understand that it was necessary to retreat, that it was necessary to know how to retreat, that it was absolutely necessary for them to learn how to work legally in the most reactionary parliaments, in the most reactionary trade unions, co-operative societies, social insurance and similar organisations."

And indeed, the most noteworthy feature of the years of revolutionary defeat and the triumph of savage reaction was that the Bolshevik Party, although shattered and enfeebled, and in spite of the general collapse and decline of the working class movement, nevertheless managed to preserve its organisation and, under the guidance of its brilliant leader, establish and strengthen new forms of contact with the working class vanguard and with the working class masses, thereby saving itself from becoming an impotent and isolated sect. But for the *Iskra* traditions of organisation, but for *What Is To Be Done* and the consistent and stubborn struggle against Menshevik slackness and organisational muddle-headedness on behalf of a centralised organisation fused

by an iron discipline, the Bolsheviks would never have survived the critical period which had overtaken the revolutionary movement. Without the tremendous political experience gained prior to the revolution and during the revolution itself (which had brought millions of people into action), and without the experience learned from the revolutionary and working class movements of the advanced capitalist countries, the Bolsheviks would not have been able to adjust themselves so quickly and effectively to the conditions of reaction, they would not have been able to preserve their contacts with the stable and persevering elements of the working class, and to preserve their political fighting capacity until the tide of revolution once more turned, thanks to which they were able to emerge from the crisis still more strengthened ideologically.

There is another noteworthy fact. The Bolsheviks succeeded in carrying out their proletarian revolutionary line not only in opposition to the Menshevik liquidators and the non-factional centrist conciliationists of the Trotsky ilk. The years of reaction, the defeat of the revolutionary movement and the growing influence of bourgeois ideology, created within the ranks of the Bolsheviks themselves, in addition to the "Left" otzovists and ultimatumists, a Right deviation, as expressed in a conciliationist attitude towards liquidationism. Certain Bolsheviks followed the lead of the liquidators in declaring that the Prussian path of capitalist development had definitely triumphed in Russia, that the bourgeois-democratic revolution must be considered as definitely completed and that it was now necessary to build up a party on the European model, that is, a party after the type of the parties of the Second International. It is worth noting that certain even of the otzovists came to adopt the view that the bourgeois-democratic revolution had ended. Once again the liquidators of the Right stretched out a hand to the liquidators of the "Left."

We have seen how at the Plenum of the Central Committee in January 1910 the conciliationist elements within the Bolshevik ranks attempted, in spite of Lenin, to divert the Bolsheviks from conducting irreconcilable war against liquidationism. One of the most prominent representatives of this tendency, Kamenev, who had been delegated to the editorial board of Trotsky's *Pravda* by the Central Committee, after the Plenum adopted an attitude of compromise towards Trotskyism. It was only because they suc-

ceeded in overcoming these conciliationist elements within their own ranks that the Bolsheviks were able to deal a crushing blow to the liquidators organisationally and politically and to those who inclined towards liquidationism, and to assume the leadership of the revolutionary working class movement when the tide once more began to turn. At the same time, the leading group within the Bolshevik Party conducted a bitter struggle against the "Left" deviationists, against the attempt to apply in a period of reaction the tactics appropriate to a revolutionary period and to renounce the opportunities for legal forms of activity, which, had it become generally adopted, would have transformed the Party into an impotent sect.

The Leninist core of the Bolshevik Party emerged triumphant from this struggle against the two deviations, and as a result was able rapidly to re-establish and consolidate the Party with the first onset of the tide of revolution.

During the most difficult years of reaction, the Party, under Lenin's leadership, refused to tolerate the slightest vacillation; it steered its course towards the new revolution, not for a moment forgetting the tremendous international significance of that revolution.

In August 1908 Lenin wrote:

"The international revolutionary movement of the proletariat does not proceed and cannot proceed evenly and in the same form in different countries . . . On the whole, we clearly see that international socialism has made an enormous stride forward, we see the welding together of the armies of millions of proletarians in a number of concrete encounters with the enemy, we see the approach of the decisive struggle against the bourgeoisie—a struggle for which the working class is immeasurably better *prepared* than was the case at the time of the Commune, that last great rebellion of the proletarians . . . The Russian Revolution possesses a great international ally both in Europe and in Asia, but at the same time, and *just because of this*, it possesses not only a national, not only a Russian, but also an *international* enemy. Reaction against the intensifying struggle of the proletariat is inevitable in all the capitalist countries, and this reaction unites the bourgeois governments of the whole world against any popular movement, against any revolution in Asia and especially in Europe . . . The Russian bourgeoisie is inevitably gravitating more and more to the side of the international anti-proletarian and anti-democratic tendency. It is not on liberal allies that the Russian proletariat must count. It must follow independently its own path towards the complete victory of the revolution."

tion, and base itself on the necessity for a forcible solution of the agrarian question in Russia by the peasant masses themselves. It must help these masses to overthrow the rule of the Black Hundred landlords and of the Black Hundred autocracy, it must set itself the task of establishing the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry in Russia and bear in mind that its struggle and its victories are indissolubly bound up with the international revolutionary movement.” \*

\* Lenin, “Inflammable Material in World Politics,” *Selected Works*, Vol IV

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REVIVAL OF THE MOVEMENT

*Decline and revival of the strike movement—First demonstrations—Political strikes 1912-14—Efforts of the Bolsheviks to restore and strengthen the Party—The Sixth (Prague) Conference—Resolution on the liquidators—Significance of the Prague Conference—Legal forms of activity—The August 1912 Conference of the Liquidators—Elections to the Fourth Duma—Party Conferences in 1912 and 1913—Collapse of the August Bloc—The Russian Revolution and the Second International—The fight against opportunism in the international arena—Opportunism triumphs in the Second International—Second International opposes the Bolsheviks—The Bolshevik Party on the eve of the World War.*

#### *Decline and Revival of the Strike Movement*

The determined fight conducted by the Bolsheviks for the Party, in order to consolidate it and cleanse it of opportunist elements and in order to adapt it to the new conditions, met with powerful support on the part of the revolutionary mass movement. That movement recovered from the decline which followed the defeat of the revolution. An idea of the extent of that decline may be obtained from the following figures. It is calculated that about three million individuals took part in various economic and political strikes in the year 1905, of which the participants in political strikes amounted to about two million. In certain cities, *e.g.*, Riga, the number of strikers in that year exceeded the number of workers fivefold. In other words, every worker in the city of Riga on an average went on strike five times in the course of one year. In 1906 the number of strikers had dropped to a little over one million, of which some 650,000 were participants in political strikes. The corresponding figures in 1907 were 750,000 and 540,000. In 1908 there were only 174,000 strikers in all. In 1909 the number still further declined, reaching 64,000, and in 1910 dropped as low as 46,000, of which only 4,000 were participants in political strikes, the lat-

ter all occurring in connection with May Day.<sup>+</sup> But in 1911 the number of strikers had already risen to 96,000, of which 8,000 were participants in political strikes.

The decline in the strike movement came to a halt in the summer of 1910, which marked the low point of the working class movement in Russia since the 1905 Revolution. That moment was a turning point. The persistent work of the Bolshevik Party organisations began to bear fruit. From the autumn of 1910 we note a slow but increasingly marked development of the economic strike movement, followed by the development of the political movement.

### *First Demonstrations*

In the autumn of 1910 demonstrations took place in connection with the death of the former president of the First Duma, Muromtzev, and of the famous writer, Leo Tolstoy. Student demonstrations occurred in response to the brutal maltreatment of political prisoners in the Zerentui gaol in Trans-Baikal. Meetings were held in the universities, resolutions of protest passed and attempts were made to organise demonstrations in the streets.

A general strike of students broke out at the beginning of 1911, in protest against the repressive measures taken by the government, and spread throughout the whole of Russia. It too was accompanied by mass meetings and the adoption of revolutionary resolutions. Yet, judging by the character of the participants in the demonstrations of the end of 1910 and the beginning of 1911, and by the nature of their slogans, it seemed as though the country had been thrown back a whole decade. The demonstrators consisted of the most advanced sections of the working class and the more active sections of the students, but the general proletariat remained inactive. These demonstrations in respect of the numbers of participants were still a long way from the working class demonstrations of 1905.

Nevertheless, a new phase of the old struggle had begun.

\* The following figures are also of interest in 1905 the employers were victorious in 29.4 per cent of the economic strikes; in 1906, 35.5 per cent, in 1907, 57.6 per cent and in 1908, 68 per cent (Lenin, "The Historical Meaning of the Internal Party Struggle in Russia," *Selected Works*, Vol. III) The figures cited in the text are compiled from data given in various articles of Lenin.

In this connection Lenin in December 1910 wrote:

"... A new upward movement began in the summer of the present year. The number of economic strikes is increasing, and increasing rapidly. The phase in which the reaction of the Black Hundred held *full sway* has come to an end. A new phase has begun, a rising phase. The proletariat, which from 1905 to 1909, although with considerable intervals, was *in retreat*, is collecting its forces and proceeding to *attack*. The revival in certain branches of industry immediately leads to the revival of the proletarian struggle.

"The proletariat began it. Others, the bourgeois, democratic classes and sections of the population, are continuing it. The death of the moderate-liberal president of the First Duma, Muromtzev, a man alien to democracy, was the signal for the first timid manifestations. The death of Leo Tolstoy was the signal for *street demonstrations* (the first after a long interval), in which primarily students participated, but also some workers. The cessation of work in a number of mills and factories on the day of Tolstoy's funeral marks the beginning, albeit still 'modest beginning, of the first demonstration strikes.

"The unrest among the students has been recently still further heightened by the brutality of the tsarist gaolers, who tortured our comrades sentenced to penal servitude in the prisons of Vologda and Zverintui and persecuted for their heroic struggle on behalf of the revolution. Meetings and assemblies are taking place all over Russia, the police violently break into the universities, beat up the students, arrest them, prosecute newspapers printing the slightest word of truth regarding the disturbances, and thereby only add fuel to the unrest.

"The proletariat began it. The democratic youth are continuing it. The Russian people are awakening to a new struggle, are advancing towards a new revolution.

"The first beginnings of the struggle prove that the forces are still alive that shook the tsarist government in 1905, and which will smash it in the forthcoming revolution. The first beginnings of the struggle have again proven the importance of a *mass* movement. No persecution and no punishment can stop the movement once the *masses* have risen, once the millions have begun to stir."\*

### *Political Strikes, 1912-14*

On January 9, 1912, for the first time after many years, political strikes broke out in St. Petersburg and other cities. An economic strike also broke out in the beginning of 1912 in the Lena goldfields in Eastern Siberia, fifteen hundred kilometres from the railroad and from the nearest centre of civilisation in Siberia, Irkutsk, and which for three-quarters of a year is cut off not only from Russia but even from Siberia.

\* Lenin, "The Beginning of Demonstrations," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIV,



Workers' delegates at one of the mines had been arrested. The workers from the neighbouring mines came in a crowd to demand their release. Without warning of any kind fire was opened on the crowd, as a result of which hundreds were killed and wounded. But the workers were not intimidated. The strike continued.

When the news of this brutal, although for Russia not unusual, shooting spread throughout the country, political protests broke out in various industrial centres, spontaneously and independently of each other. Over 200,000 workers participated in these strikes.<sup>1</sup>

The shooting of the workers in the Lena goldfields took place on April 4, 1912, and was immediately followed by the protest strikes. A few weeks later, on the occasion of May 1, some 200,000 workers suddenly ceased work in St. Petersburg, which had not seen a May Day strike since 1907. Simultaneously, tens of thousands of workers went on strike in other parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> A little later, in the summer of the same year, for the first time since 1907 unrest broke out in a number of army divisions, as well as in the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets. This was a serious *memento mori* for the tsarist government.

The unrest among the soldiers and sailors clearly showed that the political stirring that had begun among the working class was spreading to the peasant masses, for the army and navy consisted largely of peasants.

Such was the abrupt turn in the political situation that took place in 1912. According to the extremely moderate calculations of the Society of Factory and Mill Owners, whose interest it of course was to keep the working class movement in the background, or, at least, to minimise it, the number of participants in political strikes amounted to 4,000 in 1910, 8,000 in 1911 and 850,000 in 1912.<sup>3</sup>

The rising tide of strikes which began in 1912 did not ebb

<sup>1</sup> Such strikes occurred in St. Petersburg, Riga, Saratov, Kiev, Odessa, Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Kherson, Nikolayev and Soimovo.

<sup>2</sup> Three hundred thousand workers went on strike according to figures given by the Society of Factory and Mill Owners, which, of course, tend to underestimate, rather than exaggerate. (Cf. Lenin, *Manufacturers on the Workers' Strikes*, *Collected Works*, Vol. XVI.)

<sup>3</sup> Three hundred and forty thousand workers took part in the political strikes which occurred in connection with the opening of the Fourth Duma, the arrests of the workers' delegates, and the death sentences on the participants in the disturbances in the army.

again until the very outbreak of the war. In 1913 strikes broke out on the most varied pretexts: solidarity with the soldiers and sailors, anniversaries of revolutionary events, etc. The May Day demonstration in St. Petersburg in 1913 was even more impressive and menacing than the demonstration of 1912. The workers, not content with a demonstration strike, came out on the streets, tried to penetrate to the centre of the city and organised demonstrations which the police managed to disperse only with great difficulty.

Strikes broke out in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1914 in protest against the unhygienic and insanitary conditions prevailing in certain factories, which had resulted in the wholesale poisoning of working women.

May 1, 1914, was again marked by general strikes in St. Petersburg and other industrial centres. In July the strikes and demonstrations in St. Petersburg tended to open street fighting. We sense again the atmosphere that prevailed in St. Petersburg at the end of 1905. But the outbreak of the war brought the strike movement to a halt for the time being.

Such is the picture presented by the rising revolutionary movement in Russia in the years 1910 to 1914. The wave of mass economic and political strikes increased and spread from month to month and was accompanied by the growth of the revolutionary and oppositional spirit among the democratic elements associated with the working class.

This extremely significant feature of the movement was from the very outset, in January 1911, emphasised by the organ of the Bolsheviks, *The Social-Democrat*:

"But what is most important is that new sections of the population, fresh battalions, are being drawn into the struggle. It was undoubtedly the younger generation who took the most active part in the students' demonstrations. It was the younger generation of students who formed the main body of the demonstrators. It was they who bore the whole brunt of the movement, they who initiated it, often against the direct opposition of the 'old guard,' and their grouchings and exhortations 'not to be in a hurry.' The same thing is observed in the case of the workers. In the mills and factories everywhere the younger workers are coming to the fore: they are the leaders and 'instigators.' A new generation of young workers, which reached manhood physically during the years of counter-revolution, is now beginning to stand on its own feet *politically*."

The industrial boom which began towards the close of 1909 undoubtedly favoured the development of the economic strike

movement in the years 1911 to 1914. The output of pig iron increased from three million tons in 1910 to five million tons in 1913, while the output of coal increased from twenty-five million tons to thirty-six million tons in the same period. The development of heavy industries and the concentration of production proceeded rapidly. At the same time we observe an acceleration in the formation of trusts and the development of the banking system, as well as the fusion of industrial capital with banking capital, so typical of the imperialist phase of development of capitalism in Europe and America. This process was somewhat belated in Russia. Another significant feature of the years 1910 to 1914 was the increased investment of foreign capital, chiefly French and Belgian, in Russian industries and banks.

It was only natural that with the growing economic power of the bourgeoisie, its appetite for political influence and power should also increase. The political regime of the Third of June could not satisfy this growing appetite. Moreover, the rising tide of the working class movement contained an unpleasant menace of approaching revolution. As a result, a section of the bourgeoisie was driven into opposition to the tsarist government, an opposition which as a rule they justified by the argument that timely reform in the direction of a bourgeois constitutional system could alone prevent revolution.

Under the influence of the growing mass movement, rifts began to form within the Third of June *bloc*; wavering and uncertainty and division of opinion began to make themselves apparent. Realising and fearing the growing activity of the masses, the bourgeoisie adopted a more hostile tone towards the tsarist government. We have since seen what a complete change of front the bourgeoisie effected in the February Revolution of 1917, with what celerity they donned red favours and attempted to attach themselves to the train of revolution, which on the very eve of its triumph they strove with such utter ruthlessness to suppress. In the same way the revolutionary atmosphere that began to make itself felt in 1912 profoundly influenced the frame of mind of the bourgeoisie. Yet, in spite of their oppositional utterances, both political wings of the bourgeoisie—the Octobrists and the Cadets—continued to strive to come to an agreement with the autocracy and at all costs to prevent the triumph of the revolution.

*Efforts of the Bolsheviks to Restore and Strengthen  
the Party*

Such was the situation that faced the Party after 1910. The political revival did not begin immediately. It was not until after the events in the Lena goldfields, that is, from the spring of 1912, that the revival of the political movement became fully apparent. The bitter struggle waged by the Bolsheviks against the Menshevik liquidators since the plenary session of the Central Committee ended with the retirement of the two Menshevik members (Martov and Dan) from the editorial staff of the central organ, which now consisted of two Bolsheviks and a representative of the Polish Social-Democratic Party. On the other hand, an anti-Bolshevik majority was formed in the Foreign Bureau of the C.C., consisting of a Menshevik, a Bundist and a Latvian, who adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the liquidators. The Bolshevik and the Pole retired from the Foreign Bureau.<sup>1</sup>

This resulted in the following situation: The Russian Central Committee had ceased to exist, the Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee was in the hands of the liquidators, and the central organ in the hands of the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks once more attempted to summon a plenary meeting of the Central Committee. But this was not an easy matter. What legal and generally recognised body could take this function upon itself? The Foreign Bureau of the C.C. was not anxious to summon a plenum; it had nothing to gain therefrom, for the aim of the Mensheviks was to destroy the Party. The Foreign Bureau exerted every effort to prevent the summoning of a plenary meeting. And so the matter dragged on from month to month.

At last Lenin decided that the time had arrived when the question of expelling the liquidationist agents of the bourgeoisie from the Party must be put bluntly. It was time, he considered, to complete the organisational process of the Bolshevik Party by rallying the Party elements who had co-operated with the Bolsheviks in practical work and who would be willing to go to

\* Towards the end of 1910 the Central Committee of the Latvian Social-Democratic Party replaced its representative on the Foreign Bureau, Berzin, a supporter of the Bolsheviks, by Schwartz-Ehas, a liquidator. This was a result of the fact that the Bolshevik-minded members of the Central Committee of the Latvian Party were arrested and the Mensheviks gained the majority

any length to cleanse the Party of all traces of opportunism.\* At the end of 1910 the Bolsheviks issued a statement declaring that they considered themselves released of all obligations they had assumed at the plenum, since the decisions of the plenum had been grossly violated by the liquidators.

A few months later, in June 1911, the Bolsheviks assembled the members of the C.C. and, together with the Poles, formed what was known as the Foreign Organisation Commission. This Commission took upon itself the task of summoning a general Party conference.† This Commission initiated the *bloc* of Bolsheviks, Poles and Menshevik supporters of the Party as against the Menshevik liquidators, the Bundists, the Latvians, the Trotsky group and the *Vperyod* group, all of whom refused to recognise the Foreign Organisation Commission and waged a bitter campaign against it.

But very soon a split occurred in the Foreign Commission itself, again as the result of Plekhanov's hesitations and waverings. Plekhanov could not make up his mind for a definite break with the Mensheviks, he could not grasp the Bolshevik principles of organisation, he considered that opportunism could exist as a legitimate tendency within the Russian Party, just as in the West

\* By that time the majority of the Mensheviks had completely gone over to the position of the liquidators. In a five-volume book (only four volumes of which appeared) entitled *The Social Movement in Russia at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* the Mensheviks renounced even the views they had themselves entertained during the first revolution. They abandoned the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution, an idea, the seeds of which were contained in the publications of the Emancipation of Labour Group, and which the Party had consistently advocated throughout several decades of struggle. The Mensheviks now attributed the defeat of the Revolution of 1905 to the fact that the proletariat had taken too prominent a part in that revolution and the bourgeoisie had not yet sufficiently matured. Furthermore, the Mensheviks declared, rather belatedly, that the peasant movement during the period of the first revolution was a reactionary movement. The conclusion to be drawn from the Mensheviks' analysis of the events of 1905-07 was that Russia would not see another democratic revolution. Hence, it followed that the programme and tactics of the Party must be revised and the illegal organisation disbanded.

\*\* The Bundists did not attend this meeting, while the Menshevik Igor (Goldman-Gorev) retired from it after the first meeting.

\*\*\* The Commission consisted of L. B. Kamenev, N. A. Semashko, A. I. Rykov (who had just escaped from exile, and who was subsequently replaced on the Commission by M. F. Vladimirovsky), Mark (Lyubimov) and Tyszkó. The Organisation Commission set up a Technical Commission, consisting of A. I. Rykov, Zinoviev and Tyszkó.

European Parties, but that the framework of Bolshevik discipline was too rigid for it. This was one of the most serious moments in the history of Bolshevism. Even a number of the prominent Bolsheviks abroad refused to follow Lenin's lead.

Thereupon, completely ignoring both the foreign organisations and the Bolshevik compromisers, the Leninist Bolshevik nucleus proceeded to set up a Russian Organisation Commission and invited the participation of a number of practical workers who had come to the fore in the years of reaction.<sup>1</sup> This Russian Organisation Commission summoned the Sixth All-Russian Party Conference, which was held in Prague in January 1912. This Conference marked a turning point in the history of the Russian Party. From that moment the Party, as represented by its basic Bolshevik nucleus, finally severed all formal connection with the Menshevik liquidators, *i.e.*, with the vast majority of the Mensheviks, and expelled them from the Party. The Prague Conference of 1912 was the culmination of the struggle waged against the opportunists for the purification and consolidation of the Bolshevik Party.

### *The Sixth (Prague) Conference*

Practically all the illegal Party organisations in existence at the time were represented at the Prague Conference, in particular, the organisations of St Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, Nikolayev, Saratov, Kazan, Vinnitsa, Dvinsk, Tiflis and Baku.<sup>1\*</sup>

The Conference assumed all the rights and functions of a Party congress. It was a bold step and provoked a storm of indignation on the part of all currents and groups which had not

<sup>1</sup> In particular, a prominent part in the Russian Organisation Commission was played by Semyon Schwartz, Orjonikidze and Golostchekin (Philip).

<sup>1\*</sup> Among the delegates to the Conference was Zalutsky, Golostchekin, D. Schwartzman, Voronsky, L. Serebriyakov, Suren Spandaryan, Zevin (one of the twenty-six commissars of Baku shot by the British), Dogadov and Pyatnitsky. Among the delegates were two *agents-provocateurs* (Malinovsky and Romanov). Practically all the organisations that sent delegates to the conference were Bolshevik organisations. Only in the Kiev and Ekaterinoslav organisations did the majority consist of Menshevik supporters of the Party, but in the main they worked hand in hand with the Leninist Bolsheviks. Two representatives of the Social-Democratic fraction in the Third Duma, Poletayev (Bolshevik) and I. Pokrovsky (Menshevik Party-supporter), arrived too late to participate in the Conference.

sent delegates to the Conference. According to the Party statutes, then as well as now, a conference is a deliberative body, the decisions of which become effective only if ratified by the Central Committee. Such was the procedure definitely laid down by the Fifth (London) Congress. But the Prague Conference could not confine itself to deliberative functions. Who was to ratify its decisions, when the old Central Committee had completely collapsed and a new Central Committee could be set up only by the Conference itself? The Conference, accordingly, had no other alternative than to assume the rights of a Party congress and elect a new Central Committee.

The Conference adopted a resolution recording the absence of delegates from the national Social-Democratic organisations in spite of repeated invitations and enjoining the C.C. to take measures for establishing organisational contact with the national organisations.

The national organisations were not represented because the Central Committee of the Bund held a liquidationist position, analogous to that of the Menshevik *Voice of the Social-Democrat*; the Central Committee of the Latvian Party was dominated by conciliators and liquidators, while the Polish Central Committee occupied what was in fact a centrist position and declared that the Leninists were as much disrupters of the Party from the Left, as the liquidators were from the Right.

The Conference adopted an extensive resolution dealing with the current situation and the tasks of the Party in connection therewith. The resolution developed the basic decisions of the Paris Conference of 1908. It pointed out that the government had failed to satisfy the demands of the masses of the people: the peasants had not secured land at the expense of the estates of the landlords, while all the government had done was to meet the wishes of the kulak sections of the peasantry; the working class had been deprived of all the gains won in the revolution. Hence, the Party must not retreat one inch from its revolutionary position. It must carry on its propaganda and agitation under the old revolutionary slogans, and in particular the three fundamental slogans: (1) a democratic republic, (2) an eight-hour working day and (3) the confiscation of the landlords' estates. While the Bolsheviks thus reaffirmed these three slogans, the Mensheviks, anxious

to adapt themselves to the Stolypin legal system, did everything possible to hush up the demand for a republic, were rather shaky over the demand for an eight-hour working day and considered the demand for the confiscation of the landlords' estates as entirely antiquated.

Even in 1906 and 1907 the Mensheviks had done everything to "explain away" the revolutionary demand for the confiscation of the estates of the landlords. Now, in 1912, the slogan of a democratic republic was also not very much to their taste. The Mensheviks were attempting to find a legal niche for themselves under the Stolypin regime, in other words, to come to terms with the monarchy. To pronounce themselves in favour of a democratic republic would be tantamount to declaring war on the autocracy.

The resolution of the Prague Conference emphasised the necessity for taking as active a part as possible in the elections to the Fourth State Duma. All within the Bolshevik camp were now agreed on this point. The boycottists and the otzovists—the "divine otzovists," as they were then called—had gone over to the *Vperyod* group and had become hopelessly isolated from the movement. In the non-working class electoral *curiae* the resolution sanctioned agreements with the Left parties of the revolutionary bourgeois-democratic movement, but not with the Cadets (Constitutional-Democrats). As regards the working class *curiae* the resolution advocated putting up independent candidates and opposing the candidates of all other parties, including the liquidators.

Another resolution of the Conference dealt with organisational questions and with the Party Statutes. Changes in the statutes were necessitated by the drastic decline in the size of the Party. In view of the great reduction of membership it would be absurd to summon Party conferences every three months, and Party congresses once every year, with a representation of one delegate from every thousand members. These points in the statutes were accordingly amended. The right of co-optation was again affirmed and extended. The Conference emphasised the necessity of so constructing the illegal organisations of the Party as to enable them to carry on the illegal struggle and at the same time to maintain the closest possible contact with the legal organisa-



tions of the working class, which were to serve as their main support.

Of extreme importance were the resolutions dealing with the campaign for a petition and with the question of the liquidators. The whole policy of the liquidators was now based on adaptation to the legal opportunities of the Stolypin system. The liquidators considered it inexpedient to retain the illegal Party organisation. They maintained that the time had arrived for the creation of a new, legal party, and that all that was required was to secure certain changes in political conditions which would permit such a party to function. In order to obtain such changes they advocated a policy of "freedom of coalition."

Freedom of coalition did not mean a democratic republic. It could be secured from the tsarist government and from the Third of June Duma. The liquidators strove to create their legal party under the conditions of the Third of June regime.

In 1911 a former Bolshevik, Rozhkov, who had gone over to the liquidators, proposed to form in place of the antiquated illegal party a Society for the Defence of the Interests of the Workers and to endeavour to obtain the ratification of the statutes of that society.

But how was the consent of the government to be obtained to freedom of coalition, which would permit the creation of a legal party? The answer was—petitions. Accordingly, the liquidators started an agitation among the workers for the collection of signatures for a petition to the State Duma.

As a form of "struggle," this was, of course, ludicrous. It might sow constitutional illusions among the working class, but it could not produce real and tangible results. The Conference vigorously expressed its opposition to this campaign.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dan, in his Appendix to the German edition of Martov's book *The History of the RSDLP.*, was obliged to admit the utter collapse of the campaign for freedom of coalition. "The attitude of the Bolsheviks towards the fight for freedom of coalition met with a certain amount of response among the masses, who because of their total lack of experience in organisation, were unable to appreciate the value of the right of coalition. Thanks to the activities of the Bolsheviks, the coalition campaign collapsed. The demagogic agitation carried on by the Bolsheviks influenced the fraction in the Duma, who were anxious to preserve a position of neutrality. Moreover, the supporters of the campaign for the right of coalition, instead of devoting themselves to agitation among the masses, were obliged to combat the Bolshevik demagogues."

*Resolution on the Liquidators*

The resolution of the Prague Conference on the subject of the liquidators was one of extreme political importance. It stated that in view of the fact that:

"1) For about four years the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party has been waging a determined struggle against the liquidationist tendency, which at the Party Conference of December 1908 was defined as 'the attempts of a certain section of the Party intelligentsia to liquidate the existing organisation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and substitute for it an amorphous association within the limits of legality at all costs, even if this legality is to be attained at the price of an open renunciation of the programme, tactics and traditions of the Party'.

"2) that the Plenum of the Central Committee in January 1910, in continuing its struggle against this tendency, unanimously recognised it as a manifestation of the influence of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat and stipulated as a condition of real Party unity and fusion of the former factions of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks a complete rupture with liquidationism and the final overcoming of this bourgeois deviation from socialism,

"3) that in spite of all the decisions of the Party and in spite of the obligation undertaken by the representatives of all the factions at the Plenum in January 1910, the section of the Social-Democrats grouped around the magazines *Nasha Zarya* and *Dyelo Zhizni* openly took up the defence of the tendency recognised by the entire Party as the product of bourgeois influence over the proletariat,

"4) that the ex-members of the Central Committee Mikhail, Yurii and Roman not only refused to join the Central Committee in the spring of 1910, but declined even to attend one meeting for the purpose of co-opting new members and openly declared that they considered the very existence of the Central Committee of the Party as 'harmful';

"5) that since this very Plenum of 1910 the above-mentioned principal publications of the liquidators, *Nasha Zarya* and *Dyelo Zhizni*, have turned decidedly and along the whole line towards liquidationism, not only 'belittling' (in spite of the decisions of the Plenum) 'the importance of the illegal Party,' but directly renouncing the Party, calling it a corpse, declaring the Party to be already dissolved, describing the restoration of an illegal Party as 'reactionary utopia,' heaping calumny and abuse on the illegal Party in the pages of the legal magazines, calling upon the workers to consider the Party nuclei and its hierarchy as 'atrophied,' etc.,

"6) that while all over Russia Party men, without distinction of faction, have united for the urgent task of convening a Party conference, the liquidators, having segregated themselves into quite independent little groups, have split even in those localities where Party Mensheviks predominate (Ekaterinoslav, Kiev), and have definitely refused to main-

tain any Party contacts with the local organisations of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, the Conference declares that the group represented by *Nasha Zarya* and *Dyelo Zhizni* [these papers were in fact the official organs of the Menshevik centre—*NP*] has, by its behaviour, definitely *placed itself outside the Party*”

The Prague Conference adopted resolutions protesting against the tsarist attack on Persia and the punishment of the Persian revolutionaries, and welcoming the Chinese revolution (Sun Yat-sen had just been made first president of the Chinese Republic). Even at that time the Party, led by Lenin, clearly understood the significance of the awakening of the peoples of the East.<sup>1</sup>

### *Significance of the Prague Conference*

The Prague Conference was an event of prime importance in the history of the Russian Party. At the Conference the Party definitely dissociated itself from the small groups and tendencies that were hampering its activities. It also definitely broke with its open enemies and declared its complete organisational independence of the opportunists (liquidators) and the Centrists (Trotsky). The Party became possessed of a closely welded and politically homogeneous Central Committee,<sup>2</sup> which henceforward assumed the guidance of its activities. The Prague Conference was a big step towards the final consolidation in Russia of a revolutionary proletarian party of a new type, a monolithic militant organisation, cleansed of opportunists and of the factionalism, which, according to Lenin, was a characteristic feature of the Social-Democratic Party at a certain period (from 1903 to 1911). By expelling the liquidators from the Party, the Prague Conference struck a severe blow at factionalism, “nominally, unity (they *say* we are all one party), but actually disintegration,” as Lenin described factionalism. Two years later, Lenin was able to write:

<sup>1</sup> The Conference also adopted resolutions dealing with the duties of the Social-Democrats in connection with the famine and on state insurance.

<sup>2</sup> The Central Committee elected at the Prague Conference consisted of Lenin, Zinoviev, Orjonikidze, D. Schwartzmann (Menshevik supporter of the Party), Golostchekin and Malinovsky. The C.C. after the Conference co-opted Stalin, who since then has been uninterruptedly a member of every C.C. The substitute members of the C.C. elected at the Conference were Bubnov, Smirnov, Kalinin, Stasova and Spandaryan.

"Since 1912, for more than two years, there has been *no* factionalism in Russia among the organised Marxists, no disputes on tactics in the *united* organisations, at the *united* conferences and congresses. There is a *complete* break between the Party—which in January 1912 formally announced that the liquidators *do not* belong to it—and the liquidators." <sup>1</sup>

But the significance of the Prague Conference consisted not only in the fact that it broke with the liquidators. It was also a decided victory over the anti-Lenin deviations among the Bolsheviks themselves. What made the general break with the liquidators possible was the fact that the tendency to compromise with liquidationism shared by many of the Bolsheviks had been fought down. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks succeeded in definitely nullifying the disruptive influence of the "Left" otzovists and ultimatumists, who had completely failed to realize what tremendous changes within the country and within the working class had been wrought by the Revolution of 1905-07. The Party after the Prague Conference, having completely overcome the otzovist and ultimatumist tendencies within its ranks, redoubled its efforts to make use of all existing opportunities for legal forms of activity, as well as to win over the working class elements belonging to, or associated with, legally existing organisations, the monopoly within which as a rule had hitherto belonged to the Menshevik liquidators. Official positions within these legal organisations were largely held by liquidators, who used these positions in order to snipe the Party and to attempt to exercise their influence over the working class.

### *Legal Forms of Activity*

Had the improbable occurred and the otzovists, the ultimatumists and the *Vperyod* group triumphed within the ranks of the Bolshevik Party, nothing would have changed; everything would have continued as heretofore. Their triumph would have been a political gift to the liquidators. The "Left" deviation played directly into the hands of the "Right" opportunists. But the "Left" sectarian groups had now been completely smashed.

\* Lenin, "Violation of Unity under Cover of Cries for Unity," *Selected Works*, Vol. IV

As a result, the Party after the Prague Conference was able to undertake a persistent and systematic struggle to make the fullest possible use of all legal opportunities for action. The first task was the organisation of a legal Party press. It is true that even prior to the Prague Conference a 'weekly paper had been appearing in St. Petersburg, *Zvezda* (*The Star*), founded in December 1910 by Leninist Bolsheviks, and for some time enjoying the support of the Menshevik Party-supporters. This paper continued to appear throughout the whole of 1911, but at the Prague Conference it was decided to create a *daily* workers' paper. Widespread collections of funds were organised among the workers in order to secure the necessary capital for a daily newspaper. The latter began to appear on April 22, 1912, in St. Petersburg under the title of *Pravda* (*The Truth*). It immediately won tremendous influence and authority among the working class masses.\* The leading spirit in the efforts to organise the publication of *Pravda* was Stalin. The appearance of a legal daily was a great victory for the working class.

*Pravda* played an extremely important part in consolidating the illegal Bolshevik Party. It was not only a collective agitator, but also a collective organiser.

For a long time the liquidators were unable to organise a paper for workers, and when at last they succeeded in doing so, it was unable to compete with the Bolshevik *Pravda*. In the number of subscriptions and in the number of resolutions of support, *Pravda* rapidly forged ahead of the Menshevik paper *Luch* (*The Ray*).

Figures show that in the middle of 1913 2,500 working class groups expressed their support of *Pravda* and 540 of the Menshevik paper.\*\* *Pravda* had a circulation of 40,000, the circulation of the Menshevik daily was 10,000. Thanks to the size of its circulation and to its subscriptions, *Pravda* had no need of outside

\* For a time both *Zvezda* and *Pravda* appeared, but the former was subsequently discontinued.

\*\* On Workers' Press Day, first celebrated on April 22, 1914, *Pravda* (then appearing under the title *The Path of Truth*) received subscriptions from 1,915 workers' groups all over Russia amounting to 16,163 rubles, while the liquidators received 6,651 rubles from 588 workers' groups. On the other hand, from non-members of the working class *The Path of Truth* received 1,842 rubles, while the liquidators received 6,062 rubles. The figures for St. Petersburg were as follows: *The Path of Truth* 10,762 rubles from 1,276 workers' groups and the liquidators 2,006 rubles from 224 workers' groups. (Lenin, "Workers' Press Day," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVII)

support and paid its own way. The Menshevik paper, on the other hand, was often able to come out only thanks to donations partly received from abroad, owing to its wide contacts among the Social-Democratic Parties of Western Europe, and partly from the Menshevik Skobelev, a deputy to the Fourth State Duma and owner of big flour mills in Baku. Skobelev's donations to the Menshevik daily were very considerable.

*Pravda* was often subjected to prosecution and frequently closed down, but always immediately reappeared under a different name (*Workers' Truth, Northern Truth, Labour Truth, For Truth, Proletarian Truth*).<sup>4</sup>

Together with the efforts to form a legal workers' press, a fight was undertaken to evict the Mensheviks from the managing bodies of the trade unions, clubs and other working class organisations. In 1912 the St Petersburg Metal Workers Union,<sup>1\*</sup> which had hitherto been controlled by the Menshevik liquidators, passed into the hands of the Bolsheviks. This was the signal for a general campaign to remove the Mensheviks from all trade union posts and replace them by Bolsheviks. All such changes were carried out by general meetings of the workers. The elections of delegates and council members of the insurance societies, undertaken in accordance with the State Workers' Insurance Act of 1912, also resulted universally in majorities for the Bolsheviks. In connection with this law the Bolsheviks started an insurance campaign, which helped to stir up large masses of workers. This is an excellent example of the way the Bolsheviks made use of the legal opportunities permitted under the tsarist government. After the Prague Conference the Bolsheviks intensified and systematised their efforts to avail themselves of legal opportunities. The results justified their efforts: in time practically every legally existing organisation, the trade unions in particular, passed into the hands of the Bolsheviks.<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

\* The editorial staff of the paper consisted of Stalin, Kamenev, Olminsky, Molotov, Eremeyev and Samoylova, two members of the third Duma, Pokrovsky and Poletayev, and several of the workers' deputies to the Fourth Duma (Petrovsky, Muranov, and others)

During the autumn of 1913 a daily paper *Nash Put* (*Our Path*) appeared in Moscow, but was soon closed down.

\*\* Under the tsarist law national, or all-Russian, trade unions were forbidden, such "societies" could not exceed the scope of a single city

\*\*\* The only exceptions were the printers' union in various cities, which remained under the control of the Mensheviks.

In the summer of 1914, in his report to the Brussels Conference of the International, Lenin was able to adduce facts proving the overwhelming predominance of the Bolsheviks in the legal working class organisations, not to speak of illegal organisations, which the liquidators practically did not possess.

"The *whole* of the workers' group of the All-Russian Insurance Organisation," Lenin wrote, "consists of *Pravda* supporters, i.e., of workers who have condemned and rejected liquidationism. In the elections to the All-Russian Insurance Organisation forty-seven out of the fifty-seven delegates were *Pravda* supporters, i.e., 82 per cent. In the capital, St. Petersburg, thirty-seven *Pravda*-ists were elected to the city insurance organisation and only seven liquidators, i.e., 84 per cent *Pravda*-ists. . . . The same is true of the trade unions. Foreign comrades, hearing the speeches of Russian Social-Democrats residing abroad regarding the 'chaos of factional warfare' in Russia (such utterances were made by Rosa Luxemburg, Plekhanov, Trotsky, and others), perhaps have the impression that schism prevails within our trade union movement. Nothing of the kind. There are no parallel trade unions in Russia. Both in St. Petersburg and Moscow the trade unions are single and united. The point is that within these trade unions the *Pravda*-ists *completely predominate*."

"Among the thirteen trade unions in Moscow there is not a single liquidationist union. Of the twenty trade unions in St. Petersburg the number of members of which are recorded in our labour calendar, only the draughtsmen, druggists and office workers, and half the printers are liquidators. In all the remaining unions—the metal workers', textile workers', tailors', woodworkers', shop assistants', etc.—the *Pravda*-ists completely predominate."

### *The August 1912 Conference of the Liquidators*

The Prague Conference, assuming as it did the functions of a Party congress, and adopting a resolution declaring the liquidators expelled from the Party, aroused great indignation among all the circles not represented at the Conference, particularly, of course, among the open liquidators. Attempts were made to unite all these elements against the Leninist Bolsheviks and to create the impression that a powerful party had risen in protest against the "sectarians." In January 1912 the Russian Menshevik liquidators, the Caucasian Regional Committee (controlled by the Georgian Mensheviks), together with the members of the Latvian

\* Lenin, "Report of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P. at the Brussels Conference," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVII.

Central Committee, the Bundists, the *Vperyod*-ists and the Trotsky group, set up an organisation committee for the summoning of a "general Party conference," as opposed to the Prague Conference. Representatives of the Polish Social-Democratic Party appeared at the first meeting of the committee, but when they realised that the conference it planned to call would be a liquidationist conference, they retired from the meeting. Plekhanov entirely absented himself from the committee. In reply to the invitation, he wrote that in his opinion the purpose was not to summon a conference of the existing Party, but to organise an entirely new party in opposition to the existing Party, an attempt in which he desired to have no part.

Thus, both the Polish Social-Democrats and Plekhanov declined to have any share in the attempt to summon a conference. The latter took place in August 1912 under the management of Martov, Dan and Trotsky, representing what was known as the August *Bloc*.<sup>\*</sup> The leading spirit in the formation of this *bloc* was Trotsky, who attempted to represent his centrist, in fact Menshevik, line as a non-factional line. Apart from the liquidators and the Caucasian Regional Committee, or more precisely the Georgian Mensheviks, the only organisations represented at the Conference were the Latvian C.C., the Bund and the *Vperyod*-ists. The representation from local organisations was purely fictitious. Even Martov, writing to Axelrod, was obliged to confess the insignificance of the Conference. The latter adopted a number of resolutions, chiefly abusing the Bolsheviki. It also approved an election platform in which the slogans of the Party were drastically curtailed and the whole Party platform was represented practically as consisting solely of the demand for freedom of coalition. The platform completely slurred over the demand for a republic; in place of the confiscation of the landlords' estates, it proposed a revision of the agrarian laws passed

Several months prior to the conference Martov wrote that circumstances were compelling Trotsky to follow in the path of the Mensheviks, in spite of his professed plan for a sort of "synthesis" of historical Menshevism and historical Bolshevism. Owing to this contradiction, Trotsky found himself in the camp of the "liquidationist *bloc*," and, moreover, was forced to assume "a most aggressive attitude towards Lenin."

In 1911 Trotsky had written a number of articles for the liquidationist journal *Nasha Zarya*, supporting the campaign in favour of a petition and the slogan of freedom of coalition.



by the Third Duma, and in place of the demand for the universal arming of the people, it proposed—the improvement of the lot of the soldiers. The Conference declared that the demand for national cultural autonomy advanced by the Bundists, and adopted not long prior to the Conference by the Caucasian Social-Democrats, although rejected by them previously, did not conflict with the Party programme. This was a plain attempt to adapt socialism to nationalism. From first to last, the whole work of the Conference bore such a patent opportunist character, that even the *Vperyod*-ists, who had shared in the work of summoning and organising the Conference, and who maintained the closest contact with the liquidators behind the scenes, retired from the Conference, declaring that it represented only the Right and opportunist elements.

The pompously announced attempt to mobilise the “genuine” party against the “Leninists” turned out to be a soap bubble. Not a single illegal organisation was represented at the Conference, for the simple reason that the liquidators had no illegal organisations.

Plekhanov in his paper *For the Party* poured scorn on the whole idea of the Conference. The Conference was a pure piece of window dressing, although it elected an organisation committee endowed with the functions of a Central Committee. In order to lend the Conference an appearance of being non-factional there was present in the quality of Bolshevik and representative of Moscow an individual named Polyakov (Katsap), who was subsequently exposed as an *agent-provocateur* and shot.

### *Elections to the Fourth Duma*

Almost immediately following the August Conference of the liquidators the elections to the Fourth Duma took place. The election law remained unchanged, guaranteeing a majority to the representatives of the landlord class and the bourgeoisie, with the result that the composition of the Fourth Duma differed very little from that of the Third Duma. The majority of the members of the Duma were Octobrists and reactionary Black Hundreds. The Left consisted of ten Trudoviki (Labourites) and thirteen

Social-Democrats (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks), who at first comprised a single fraction.

The law of June 3 prescribed that the workers should be represented in the Duma by at least six members. All these turned out to be Bolsheviks: Badayev was elected by the province of St. Petersburg, Muranov by the province of Kharkov, Petrovsky by Ekaterinoslav, Shagov by Kostroma, Samoylov by Vladimir and Malinovsky (who later turned out to be an *agent-provocateur*) by the Moscow gubernia. The remaining seven members of the fraction were Mensheviks, the majority elected from city *curiae*.<sup>\*</sup>

The workers of industrial centres supported the Bolshevik Party and its slogans; this explains why in the elections to the Fourth Duma the workers' *curiae* elected Bolsheviks. The Party and the *Pravda* conducted an active campaign in order to popularise the Bolshevik slogans. In St. Petersburg the Party election campaign was led by Stalin.

### *Party Conferences in 1912 and 1913*

The elections to the Fourth Duma were accompanied by a new spirit of Party activity and an atmosphere of political animation. Immediately following the elections a conference was summoned of the members of the Central Committee of the Party together with the active Party workers. The conference was held in December 1912. At that time Lenin and a number of the members of the C.C. residing abroad (the C.C. at the end of 1907 had been transferred from Finland to Geneva, and subsequently from Geneva to Paris), removed from Paris to Cracow, where the Party conference of 1912 took place.

The conference adopted a number of resolutions dealing with the awakening of the revolutionary spirit, the tasks of the Party, the structure of illegal organisations, etc. In the main they coincided with the resolutions of the Prague Conference; the alterations introduced reflected the changes that had taken place in the general situation, since the Prague Conference was held prior to the Lena events and the beginning of the new strike wave, while the Cracow conference took place after these events.

<sup>\*</sup> In the Second Duma the Bolshevik members comprised 47 per cent of the total number of working class representatives, in the Third Duma 51 per cent, and in the Fourth Duma 70 per cent.

"The most significant fact in the record of the working class movement and the Russian revolution for 1912," the resolution of the conference declares, "is the remarkable development both of the economic and the political strike movement of the proletariat. The number of political strikers reached one million.

"The beginning of outbreaks of discontent and mutiny in the army and navy that marked the year 1912 is undoubtedly a result of the mass revolutionary strikes of the workers and indicative of the growing unrest and indignation in democratic circles and particularly among the peasants, who constitute the greater mass of the army .

".. The new revolution, the beginning of which we are now witnessing, is an inevitable result of the bankruptcy of the Third of June policy of the tsarist government."

The resolution states that one of the immediate duties of the Party is "the organisation of revolutionary street demonstrations, both in conjunction with political strikes and as independent manifestations."

The question of a mass strike movement had at this time become another profound point of dissension between the Bolsheviks and the liquidators.

The mass political strike movement displayed an uninterrupted tendency to spread. It was an unmistakable sign of approaching revolution. It is therefore not surprising that the Mensheviks were opposed to the strike movement, declaring it to be a risky adventure. The revolutionary prospects opened up by the strike movement were for the Mensheviks unpleasant and undesirable. The Bolsheviks declared this to be a new display of opportunism and treachery on the part of the liquidators. They took the "strike fever" of the workers under their guidance and endeavoured to render the strike movement more extensive and more profound.

The conference expressed its opinion of liquidationism, exposed the hypocritical resolution of the August Conference, which gave merely verbal approval to an illegal party, and placed on record that after the August Conference the liquidators were advocating with still greater energy:

"a) an open party, b) their opposition to the illegal organisations, c) their opposition to the Party programme (as expressed in their defence of national cultural autonomy, the demand for the revision of the agrarian laws of the Third Duma, the slurring over of the demand for a republic, etc), d) their opposition to revolutionary mass strikes, and e) their approval of reformist, and exclusively legal tactics.

"Accordingly, one of the tasks of the Party is, as formerly, to wage determined warfare against the liquidationist groups, *Nasha Zarya* (*Our Dawn*) and *Luch* (*The Ray*), and to explain to the working class masses the sinister character of their teachings"

In response to the demagogic agitation of the liquidators in favour of a united party and against the "Leninist splitters." the conference called for "unity from below," i.e., unity of the workers who were in favour of illegal work in practice, and not merely in words. The conference advocated the amalgamation of the existing illegal organisations (the liquidators and their allies, the Trotskyists, had no illegal organisations), as against a mere factional alliance of leaders who resided abroad and who had no contacts with the revolutionary mass working class movement, or who even did everything in their power to hinder that movement.\*

In September 1913 another Party conference was held in Porónino.\*\* This conference placed on record the great successes achieved by the Party both in respect of the formation of illegal organisations and the employment of legal forms of activity.\*\*\* Resolutions were adopted on two questions to which the Party had paid very little attention for several years, viz., nationalism and the Narodniki, i.e., the Socialist-Revolutionaries. The two long resolutions adopted on these questions were extremely significant. Since 1913, Lenin had been devoting considerable attention to the national question. Indeed, it had engaged his attention previously, particularly during the period of the old *Iskra*, in which he defended, as against the Polish Social-Democrats and the Bundists, the fundamental point of the national programme adopted by the Party at that time, namely, the right of all nationalities to self-determination. This point he defended against the Polish Social-Democrats and the Bundists.

\* The following took part in the Conference of 1912: Lenin, Stalin, Zinoviev, three members of the Fourth Duma—Malinovsky, Petrovsky and Badayev—and the following Party workers active in Russia: V. N. Lobova (died 1924), Troyanovsky (who went over to the Mensheviks in 1917, but in 1922 returned to the Party), Sergey Medvedev, Rozmirovich, and others.

\*\* For conspirative reasons this Conference was referred to in Party literature as the August Conference.

\*\*\* The Menshevik leader, Dan, in his Appendix to the German edition of Martov's book, the *History of the RSDLP*, was obliged to make the following admission: "The sudden growth of the illegal Bolshevik nuclei was an unpleasant surprise for those Mensheviks who regarded these nuclei as a product of the disintegration of the old pre-revolutionary Party organisation and doomed to inevitable extinction."

Now, however, Lenin had come to the conclusion that it was necessary to focus attention on the national demands in the Party programme and to give them a more precise formulation. The right of self-determination advocated in the programme must be made still more explicit by the addition of the formula "including secession" so as to prevent it becoming liable to arbitrary interpretation and to prevent the possibility of it being narrowed down to mean national cultural autonomy, or the like

The point dealing with a compulsory state language must be expunged from the programme. The demand for national territorial autonomy must be included and must apply not only to Poland, but also to such provinces as Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Baltic provinces, and so on. Lenin considered that the national programme must be defined in such a way as to satisfy completely the needs of the peoples oppressed and enslaved by the tsarist government. At the same time, the distortions of the revolutionary Marxian teachings on the national question by the Polish Social-Democrats, the Bundists and the liquidators, must be vigorously resisted.

The Polish Social-Democrats continued to oppose the fundamental point of the Party programme dealing with the national question, namely, the right of nations to self-determination. They bigotedly ignored the immense and growing importance of the national question in face of the approaching revolutionary crisis. On the other hand, the Bundists, as well as the Ukrainian Social-Democrats (Yurkevich) continued to insist on the demand for national cultural autonomy. The Georgian Mensheviks now also associated themselves with this demand, although formerly, during the period of revolution, they had opposed it. Lenin pointed out that side by side with the growth of Russian chauvinism among the ruling classes of tsarist Russia, national chauvinism was also growing among the petty bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationalities. The demand for national cultural autonomy was a reflection of the growth of this spirit, and the aim of the Georgian Mensheviks and the Bundists was to create dissension among the working class of the various nationalities. While vigorously resisting national chauvinism, even when manifested by the oppressed nationalities, the Party must be careful not to ignore the importance of the national question and of adopting a correct policy in relation to that question. The fundamental theses of the

Party programme on the national question had been expounded by Lenin and Stalin in several articles (*Marxism and the National Question*) and formed the basis for the decisions of the Conference.

These articles declared in favour of the right of self-determination even to the extent of secession for all the nationalities inhabiting Russia. Such nationalities as desired to remain within a single state federation were to be granted territorial national autonomy. There must be no single and universal state language. Equal rights were to be allowed for all languages, including the languages of national minorities. All forms of national oppression must be abolished by law. The demand for national cultural autonomy, essentially a reactionary and petty-bourgeois demand, was definitely rejected, since its realisation would inevitably result in inflaming national hostility and enmity within the working class. The articles reaffirmed the principle of single organisations (political and trade unions) for the workers of all nationalities. Comrade Stalin, in particular, undertook a detailed criticism of the views of the chief theoretician of the Second International, Otto Bauer, on this question. It should be mentioned that the local Party organisations had hitherto not paid the national question the attention it deserved, and as a consequence were not always able successfully to counteract the influence of the bourgeois nationalists, who made great capital of their national demands among the workers and toilers of the oppressed nationalities.

. To Lenin and Stalin belong the merit of having given the Party a timely and precise formulation of the national question in the years preceding the world imperialist war, the proletarian revolution in Russia and the development of the national and colonial movement in the vast territories groaning under the subjection of the imperialist powers. The merit of having drawn attention to the national question and to the new conditions that arose after the Revolution of 1905-07 is all the greater, since in 1913 there were still no manifestations of a mass national movement in Russia.

Lenin and Stalin learned from the experience of the Revolution of 1905-07. They foresaw the tremendous role the national question would play, as it actually did play in the World War and in the 1917 Revolution. It should be noted that in the struggle over the national question which Lenin waged in his writings, he

had against him a united front, consisting on the one hand of the Luxemburgites, who ignored the national question, regarding it as merely a hangover from the past, and on the other hand, the open opportunists and petty-bourgeois nationalists.

"Rosa Luxemburg," Lenin wrote, "cannot be put on a par with the Liebmans [Bundists—*N.P.*], Yurkeviches [Ukrainian Social-Democrats—*N.P.*] and Semkovskys [Liquidators—*N.P.*], but the fact that it is precisely people of this kind who clutch at her mistake shows with particular clarity the opportunism she has lapsed into" \*.

And indeed, the arguments adduced by Rosa Luxemburg against the right of nations to self-determination were fastened upon by all who desired a revision of the programme of the Party on the national question, not to mention the fact that, as Lenin frequently pointed out, they played directly into the hands of reactionary Russian chauvinism and Polish bourgeois nationalism.

"One of the most urgent questions that confronted the parties of the Second International in the period before the war was the national and colonial question, the question of the oppressed nationalities and colonies, the question of liberating the oppressed nationalities and colonies, the question of the paths of struggle against imperialism, the question of the paths of overthrowing imperialism. For the sake of developing the proletarian revolution and encircling imperialism, the Bolsheviks proposed a policy of supporting the liberation movement of the oppressed nationalities and colonies on the basis of the self-determination of nations, and developed the plan for a united front between the proletarian revolution in the advanced countries and the revolutionary liberation movement of the peoples of the colonies and oppressed countries. The opportunists of all countries, the social-chauvinists and social-imperialists of all countries, hastened to rally against this scheme and against the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks were baited like mad dogs. What position did the Left wing Social-Democrats in the West take up at that time? They developed a semi-Menshevik theory of imperialism, rejected the principle of self-determination of nations in its Marxist sense (including separation and formation of independent states), rejected the thesis of the important revolutionary significance of the liberation movement of the colonies and oppressed countries, rejected the theory of the possibility of a united front between the proletarian movement and the movement for national emancipation and put all this semi-Menshevik hodge-podge representing an out-and-out under-estimation of the national and colonial question in opposition to the Marxist scheme of the Bolsheviks. It is well known that this semi-

\* Lenin, "On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," *Selected Works*, Vol IV

Menshevik hodge-podge was later taken up by Trotsky and used as a weapon of struggle against Leninism ”

The conference of 1913<sup>41</sup> also adopted a resolution dealing with the Narodniki. After the defeat of the Revolution of 1905-07, the Narodniki (Socialist-Revolutionaries) practically disappeared, and their organisation fell to pieces. The various issues of their central organ, *Znanya Truda* (*The Banner of Labour*) consisted at that time almost entirely of obituary notices.

The new wave of revolution caused a certain revival in the activities of the Socialist-Revolutionaries. They began to publish legal papers and managed to secure the following of certain sections of the workers. The views of the S.R. groups at that period closely approximated those of the liquidators, with whom they endeavoured to form a *bloc* against the Bolsheviks in the trade unions, the insurance societies, and similar organisations. In this we already observe the seeds of the Menshevik S.R. *bloc* of 1917.

Lenin foresaw the role the S.R.'s were to play in the impending revolution. It was, of course, determined by the peasantry, with whom the S.R.'s were associated. Lenin foresaw that the liberal bourgeoisie would use the Socialist-Revolutionaries in order to gain control of the peasant movement. As we know, in the sequel such attempts were actually made.

At this Conference it was also decided that the Bolshevik deputies should retire from the Social-Democratic fraction in the Duma and an independent fraction should be organised. This fraction was actually formed towards the end of 1913 under the name of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Fraction.

The formation of an independent fraction in the Duma was a natural and logical deduction from the decision of the Prague Conference, which completed the organisational formation of the Bolshevik Party. With the help of the Trotskyists and the Bundists, the liquidators developed a furious campaign against what

\* Stalin, "Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism," *Leninism*, Vol II

\*\* Among those present at the Conference of 1913 were Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Krupskaya, the following members of the State Duma: Badayev, Petrovsky, Malnovsky, Muranov and Shagov, and the following members of the local organisations of the Party: Troyanovsky, Shotman, Inessa Armand and Rozmurovich. There was also present Hanecki and Kamenski, representatives of the section of the Polish Social-Democratic Party which was headed by the Warsaw organisation and which tended to follow the Leninists.



they called the Bolshevik schism. But vast numbers of working class electors expressed their approval of the action of their deputies in numerous resolutions and letters

### *Collapse of the August Bloc*

Having expelled the liquidators, and therewith the agency of the bourgeoisie within its ranks, the Bolshevik Party began to make considerable progress, steadily winning the confidence of the working class masses and expanding its revolutionary activities. But the case was entirely different with the August *Bloc*, formed by the liquidators together with Trotsky in August 1912 for the purpose of warring against the Party. At the August Conference the liquidators secured the support of the opportunist leaders of the Latvian Party, the Bundists and the Trotsky group. But very shortly a split began to take place within the *Bloc*. In February 1914 a congress of the Latvian Party was held. The new Central Committee elected at this congress consisted of Bolsheviks and their supporters. The congress decided to retire from the August *Bloc* on the grounds that it was a *bloc* of opportunists, and to start negotiations for the purpose of uniting with the Bolshevik Party. Thereupon the one large (if only nominal) Party organisation controlled by the Mensheviks, the Caucasian Regional Committee, in the person of its chairman, Noah Jordania, considered it expedient to dissociate itself on a number of questions from the liquidators and from the policy of their legal paper *Luch* (*The Ray*).

Finally, Trotsky, representing the Viennese *Pravda* group, also retired from the editorial committee of *Luch*, and together with his supporters and certain Mensheviks began to publish an independent legal journal entitled *Borba* (*The Struggle*).\*

\* It was at this time that Lenin published his devastating characterisation of Trotsky in an article entitled "Violation of Unity under Cover of Cries for Unity".

"The old participants in the Marxian movement in Russia know Trotsky's personality very well, and it is not worth while talking to them about it. But the young generation of workers do not know him and we must speak of him, for he is typical of all the five grouplets abroad, which in fact are also vacillating between the liquidators and the Party.

"During the period of the old *Iskra* (1901-03) these waverers who deserted from the 'Economists' to the *Iskra*-ists and back again were dubbed 'Tushino deserters.' (Such was the name given during the 'disturbed times'

*The Russian Revolution and the Second International*

We have already pointed out that the Marxian movement in Russia in its origin and development was closely associated with the Marxian movement in Western Europe. We dwelt on this when we discussed the views of the legal Marxists and the Economists, and their ideological kinship with the revisionists of

[the interregnum at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—Ed] in Russia to warriors deserting one camp for another.)

"When we talk of liquidationism we speak of a definite ideological trend, which has been growing for years, whose roots throughout the twenty years' history of Marxism are bound up with 'Menshevism' and 'Economism,' with the policy and the ideology of a definite class—the liberal bourgeoisie.

"The 'Tushino deserters' declare themselves to be above factions for the simple reason that they 'borrow' ideas from one faction one day and from another faction another day. Trotsky was an ardent *Iskra*-ist in 1901-03, and Ryazanov described the part he played at the Congress of 1903 as that of 'Lenin's truncheon.' At the end of 1903 Trotsky was an ardent Menshevik, i.e., one who deserted the *Iskra*-ists for the 'Economists,' he proclaimed that 'there is a deep gulf between the old and the new *Iskra*.' In 1904-05 he left the Mensheviks and began to vacillate, at one moment collaborating with Martynov (the 'Economist'), and at another proclaiming the absurdly 'Left' theory of 'permanent revolution.' In 1906-7 he drew nearer to the Bolsheviks and in the spring of 1907 declared his solidarity with Rosa Luxemburg.

"During the period of disintegration, after long 'non-factional' vacillations, he again shifted to the Right, and in August 1912 entered into a *bloc* with the liquidators. Now he is again abandoning them, repeating, however, what in essence are their pet ideas.

"Such types are characteristic as fragments of the historical formations of yesterday, when the mass labour movement of Russia was still asleep and every grouplet was 'free' to represent itself as a tendency, group, faction, in a word a 'great power' talking of uniting with others.

"The young generation of workers must know very well with whom it has to deal, when incredible pretensions are made by people who absolutely do not want to consider *either* the Party decisions, which since 1908 have determined and defined the attitude to be adopted towards liquidationism, or the experience of the present-day labour movement in Russia, which has in fact created the *unity* of the majority on the basis of the full recognition of the above-mentioned decisions." (Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. IV.)

Trotsky's retirement from the leading group of the liquidators did not mean rapprochement with the Bolsheviks. In the middle of 1913 Trotsky wrote to Chkheidze

"And what a senseless obsession is the wretched squabbling systematically provoked by the master squabbler, Lenin . . . that professional exploiter of the backwardness of the Russian working class movement . . . The whole edifice of Leninism at the present time is built up on lies and falsifications and bears within it the poisoned seed of its own disintegration."

Upon the split of the Duma fraction towards the end of 1913 Trotsky completely went over to the liquidators.

His new journal, *Borba*, which began to appear in 1913, was conducted in a decidedly anti-Bolshevik spirit.

Western Europe. As against the opportunist, centrist and semi-centrist ("Left") currents in that movement, the Bolsheviks advocated the genuine doctrine of Marx and Engels

The old *Iskra*, headed by Lenin, waged merciless war on revisionism both in Russia and abroad. The fight was not discontinued even during the Revolution of 1905-07. As Comrade Stalin correctly remarks, the Russian Bolsheviks considered that their policy towards the opportunists and Centrists should serve as a model for the West. But we have also had occasion to point out that from the very beginning of the conflict between Marxism and revisionism various ideological groupings manifested themselves among the Marxists themselves. For instance, after the appearance of Bernstein's book, *The Premises of Socialism*, Kautsky considered it possible to confine the conflict with Bernstein to purely ideological grounds, whereas Plekhanov and Rosa Luxemburg demanded the expulsion of Bernstein from the Party, although, it is true, they undertook no energetic and persistent measures to have their proposal carried into effect

The International Socialist Congress held in Paris in 1900 was obliged to define its attitude towards the revisionists and the opportunists, and in particular towards one of the leaders of the French socialists, Millerand, who had accepted a ministerial post in the French bourgeois government. Two resolutions were proposed to the Congress: one by Kautsky, amounting to a plain compromise with the opportunists and even at that time characterised as "elastic," and the other by Guesde, supported by Plekhanov, which was rather more uncompromising and tended towards an organisational split with the opportunists. As we have seen, in *What Is To Be Done* Lenin insistently demanded a break with opportunism, both ideologically and organisationally, along the whole international front. He called for the organisation of a party of a new type, which would sever itself both from the opportunists and those who were prepared to tolerate the opportunists. This policy was put into practice in relation to the Russian variety of international opportunism, *viz.*, Economism.

At the next international socialist congress, held in Amsterdam in 1904, fairly serious differences of opinion among the Marxists again manifested themselves. The Left wing, represented by Ple-

khanov and Rosa Luxemburg, continued to demand a break with opportunism, on the grounds that the position of that movement was not a proletarian class position; but the necessary political and practical conclusions were not drawn

The Amsterdam Congress of 1904 was the first at which the Bolsheviks acted as an independent party.

Plekhanov wrote a series of articles for *Iskra* dealing with the Amsterdam Congress, in which he declared that although it was true that revisionism had suffered a formal defeat at the Congress, it would be criminally frivolous to console oneself with that fact. It had to be frankly confessed that the enemy retired in complete order and would rally his forces for a new attack. Several times in these articles Plekhanov referred to the Socialist Gironde, and the Socialist Mountain \*

The Amsterdam Congress discussed the tactics of the socialists in the event of war. French "Socialist" ministerialism was at that time represented by Millerand, subsequently to become president of the French Republic, and by the future Minister for Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand.

The leader of the French Marxists, Jules Guesde, at the Amsterdam Congress publicly asked: "What is going to happen if a world war suddenly breaks out, and in the government of each of the belligerent powers there is a 'Socialist' Millerand?" But Guesde failed to foresee one thing, namely, that the outbreak of war was not very far off, and that at that moment he himself would be one of the "Socialist" Millerands.

The Russian Revolution of 1905-07 played a great part in arousing the East and developing the national revolutionary movement in a number of oriental countries (Turkey, Persia, and China). It also directly tended to aggravate the class struggle in the European capitalist countries. The strategy and tactics pursued by the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution assisted greatly in differentiating and consolidating the Left wing within the Second International. The impression created by the Russian

\* As early as 1900 Plekhanov had written an article in *Iskra* entitled "On The Threshold of the Twentieth Century," in which he said "We already observe in the socialist movement two distinct tendencies, and it is possible that the revolutionary struggle in the twentieth century may lead to what may be called a split between the 'Social-Democratic 'Mountain' and the Social-Democratic 'Gironde'."

revolution vividly influenced the proceedings of the Jena Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party in August 1905. The Congress, mainly upon the initiative of the Lefts, adopted an historic resolution declaring that the German working class must undertake a mass revolutionary struggle and prepare for a general political strike on the model of Russia.

True, at the Mannheim Congress held in the following year, the leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party, influenced by the impending defeat of the Russian revolution, began to call a retreat. The Left wing, however, stuck to its guns.

This Left wing was represented by Franz Mehring, the Marxian historian and theoretician, Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, the leader of the German working class women's movement, Karl Liebknecht, who was condemned to imprisonment in a fortress for his book on militarism, Radek, and Parvus, who after his flight from Siberia, whither he was exiled for participating in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies in St Petersburg at the end of 1905, returned to the ranks of the German Social-Democratic Party.

At the Mannheim Congress the Left wing put up a resistance not only to the revisionists, but also to the so-called centre, led by Bebel and other members of the Central Committee of the German Social-Democratic Party, the representatives of the parliamentary fraction and the representatives of the General Trade Union Commission. On this occasion, however, the Left wing proved to be in the minority. Under the influence of the December 1905 uprising, Kautsky wrote a pamphlet in which he discussed the questions of armed insurrection, the general political strike and violent revolution in relation to Europe. In the following year Kautsky wrote another pamphlet entitled *The Driving Forces and Prospects of the Revolution in Russia*, in which he takes a few paces away from Menshevism in the direction of Bolshevism. Finally, in 1909, Kautsky published yet another pamphlet, *The Road to Power*, in which it is shown that the class contradictions within capitalist society had matured to such a pitch, and the political struggle within that society had become so acute, that the proletariat was being directly faced with the task of fighting for the conquest of power. In this pamphlet, however, Kautsky gives an opportunist twist

to Marx's doctrine of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat, representing it as a question of the conquest of the bourgeois state machine, and not of the destruction of that machine and the creation of a new one.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Fight Against Opportunism in the International Arena*

From 1904 onwards there was not a single international socialist congress that did not deal with the question of imperialism and the methods of combating imperialism. This was particularly true of the Stuttgart Congress held in August 1907, at which the Bolsheviks endeavoured to organise the Left elements not only against the opportunists, but also against the centrists and the compromisers with opportunism.

After a bitter struggle, in the course of which the majority of the German delegation adopted an attitude of open compromise with opportunism, the Stuttgart Congress adopted a resolution calling for a struggle against imperialism and declaring that it was the duty of socialists in the event of the outbreak of war to endeavour in every way to bring about its cessation. The Polish and Russian delegates—Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg—introduced an amendment declaring that in the event of war Social-Democrats must take advantage of the military situation created, in order to bring about the overthrow of capitalism and to establish the power of the working class. This amendment was adopted by the Congress, although many of the delegates voted for it from purely diplomatic considerations. In an article on the Stuttgart Congress Lenin had already analysed the elements that were turning pre-war opportunism into social-chau-

<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 1906, Kautsky issued a pamphlet entitled *The American and the Russian worker*, in which he emphasised the great international significance of the Russian revolution, which was fighting not only tsarism, but also international capitalism. While somewhat exaggerating the importance of the part played by foreign capital in Russian economic life at that time, Kautsky nevertheless comes to the correct conclusion that the collapse of tsarism would be a tremendous blow to the whole economic and political system of capitalist domination over the working class. Kautsky, however, in his hostility to the Soviet Government has now allied himself with the Russian White Guards and Black Hundreds—remnants of the tsarist regime.

vinism. At the Stuttgart Congress, at which in addition to the question of militarism, there was also discussed the question of colonial policy, the majority of the commission set up by the Congress voted in favour of a colonial policy. At the full session of the Congress this point of view failed in gaining a majority by only a few votes. In this connection Lenin remarked:

"This vote [when nearly half the congress and the majority of the German delegation declared in favour of a colonial policy—*NP*] is of great significance. Firstly, it particularly exposed socialist opportunism, which had succumbed to the beguilements of the bourgeoisie. Secondly, it revealed a negative feature of the European working class movement, capable of inflicting no small harm on the cause of the proletariat and therefore deserving of serious attention

"Marx several times referred to an aphorism of Sismondi, one of profound significance. The proletarians of ancient times, it runs, lived at the expense of society. Modern society lives at the expense of the proletarians. A non-possessing, but non-toiling, class is incapable of overthrowing the exploiters

"The class of proletarians, which supports the whole of society, is alone capable of bringing about a social revolution. But we find that a widespread colonial policy has brought the European proletarian *in part* to such a state that it is *not* his labour that supports the whole of society, but the labour of almost enslaved natives of the colonies. . . Under such circumstances, material and economic conditions are created in certain countries which infect the proletariat with the virus of colonial chauvinism" \*

Thus we find that as early as 1907 Lenin had exposed the mechanism of the support given by the labour aristocracy and the apparatus of the Social-Democratic parties and the trade unions to the imperialist policy of the bourgeoisie, a mechanism which was so clearly revealed in the very first days of the outbreak of the war.

Lenin in his articles on the Stuttgart Congress flayed both the German opportunists and the German Centrists. He characterised Bebel's resolution on militarism as dogmatic, one-sided, lifeless and lending itself to a Volmar-ist [*i.e.*, openly revisionist—*N. P*] interpretation.

Lenin vigorously criticised the position adopted by Bebel at

\* Lenin, "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart," *Collected Works*, Vol. XII.

the Essen Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party held in 1907, at which, supported by opportunists of the type of Noske (later to become the assassin of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg), he argued that Social-Democrats should support wars of defence Lenin emphatically opposed the official view of the German Centrists that the police regime in Germany prevented the Party from waging a struggle against militarism.

"Jaurès justly remarked that the German Social-Democratic Party, which in its youth had survived the harsh years of the anti-socialist emergency laws and the iron hand of Bismarck, might not fear the persecution of the present-day rulers, now that it had grown incomparably larger and stronger"†

Writing of the Copenhagen International Socialist Congress in 1910 and of the conduct of the German delegation at that Congress, Lenin said:

"In general, the Germans are incapable of maintaining a consistent line of principle at International Congresses . . . The impotence of Wurm [a Centrist—*N.P.*] in face of Elm [a revisionist—*N.P.*] is one more illustration of the crisis prevailing in the German Social-Democratic Party, which is due to the increasing inevitability of a break with the opportunists"‡

At the Copenhagen Congress the Bolsheviki again attempted to achieve an international union of the Left elements of the Second International.

Lenin several times attacked Kautsky also on Russian questions. Kautsky, who went so far as to assert that the Russian Party was dead, was merely giving expression to his general Centrist position. Hence his sympathy for the liquidators and the Trotskyists. Kautsky supported Trotsky and the liquidators on the question of freedom of coalition. An article written by Lenin on the very eve of the outbreak of the World War entitled "*What Should Not Be Imitated in the German Labour Movement*" is of particular interest in this respect.

The article was provoked by a visit paid to America by Karl Legien, the leader of the German Social-Democratic trade unions,

† Lenin, "Aggressive Militarism and Anti-Military Tactics of the Social-Democrats," *Collected Works*, Vol. XII

‡ Lenin, "The Question of Co-operatives at the International Socialist Congress at Copenhagen," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIV



and the book describing this visit which Legien wrote, in which the latter scoffs at the "editors" who rebuked him for the fact that in a speech delivered before the American Congress he made no reference to socialism. Lenin writes:

"Just think what this quasi-Socialist is mocking at he is mocking at the idea of a socialist taking it into his head that he must talk *against* capitalism. Such an idea is utterly foreign to the 'statesmen' of German opportunism; they talk in a way that will not offend 'capitalism'. And while disgracing themselves by this flunkeyish renunciation of socialism, they glory in their shame."

This incident provided Lenin with the occasion for drawing general conclusions regarding the German Social-Democratic Party and its Centrist leadership.

"Legien does not belong to the man-in-the-street category. He is the representative of an army, or, to be more exact, of the officers' corps of an army of trade unions. His speech is not an accident or a slip of the tongue, nor is it a solitary escapade, or a mistake committed by a provincial German 'office clerk' overawed by the kindness of the American capitalists who betray no trace of police arrogance. If it were *only* this, it would not be worth while dwelling on Legien's speech.

'But obviously this is not the case.'

"At the International Congress in Stuttgart, half the German delegation turned out to be precisely this sort of miserable Socialists, and they voted for the ultra-opportunist resolution on the colonial question.

"If you take the German magazine the *Socialist* (??) *Monthly* you will always find in it articles by public men like Legien, thoroughly opportunist articles which have *nothing* in common with socialism and which touch on *all* the most important questions of the labour movement.

"And although the 'official' explanation of the 'official' German Party is that 'no one reads' the *Socialist Monthly*, that it has no influence, etc., this is *untrue*. The Stuttgart 'case' proved that it is untrue. The most prominent and responsible public men, parliamentarians, leaders of trade unions, who contribute to the *Socialist Monthly* are constantly and undeviatingly spreading their viewpoint among the masses.

"The official optimism' of the German Party was long ago recorded in its own camp by those whom Legien called 'those editors,' a nickname at once contemptuous (from the standpoint of a bourgeois) and honourable (from the standpoint of a Socialist). And the more often liberals and liquidators in Russia (Trotsky, of course, included) attempt to *transplant* this pleasant characteristic to *our soil*, the more resolutely must we combat it." ~ ~ ~

Lenin, "What Should Not Be Imitated in the German Labour Movement," *Selected Works*, Vol. IV

And, indeed, Trotsky, who for years together with the Mensheviks and within their ranks had been fighting Lenin, advocated the Europeanisation of the Russian working class movement, that is, that it should adopt the line of West-European Centrism, which, in its turn, had adopted West-European opportunism

### *Opportunism Triumphs in the Second International*

Yet, the German Social-Democratic Party was the leading party in the Second International. Close to it came the Austrian Social-Democratic Party, which had produced a number of theoreticians who beat all records in their ability to defend opportunist tactics by pseudo-Marxian phraseology (e.g., Otto Bauer, Renner, etc.). It should be added that the national question had assumed acute proportions in Austria. A bitter struggle was being waged between the German, Polish, Czech and Italian bourgeoisies. The national dissensions of the bourgeoisie were becoming increasingly reflected within the Social-Democratic Party. The trade union movement had split along national lines. This was followed by division in the ranks of the Party. The formerly united Party of the Austrian proletariat split up into several national opportunist parties. These parties waged bitter war among themselves in the interests of their several bourgeoisies, thereby providing a prototype of the whole future of the Second International.

What the Bund could never do in Russia owing to the resistance of the Bolsheviks, the opportunists succeeded in doing in Austria. The Social-Democratic movement in Austria on the eve of the war was permeated with the spirit of nationalism and opportunism. The working class organisations were divided in accordance with the nationality of their members.

French socialism was always marked by strong opportunist and ministerialist tendencies. In spite of the fact that the Amsterdam International Congress of 1904 had itself opposed participation in bourgeois governments, this policy was favoured by a large number of members of the French Party. Three-quarters of the work of the Party consisted of a peaceful parliamentary struggle. The opportunistic character of the members of the parliamentary fraction, who were imbued with the spirit of

typical bourgeois politicians, was reflected in the whole work of the Party. The Party appeared to be a mere appendage to the opportunist parliamentary fraction. Its actual leader, Jaurès, was essentially a Left bourgeois-democratic pacifist.

The working class movement in England at the beginning of the twentieth century was a long way behind the Continental movement. The Labour Party was just beginning to put forward its candidates as an independent party at the parliamentary elections. Hitherto the British workers, including trade union members, had in the mass voted either for the Liberals or for the Conservatives. After its successes in the 1906 elections the Labour Party began to make rapid progress, but the whole of its activities marked it as a party of liberal working class politicians, who talked a great deal about the interests of the working class, but betrayed no desire to defend those interests, least of all by revolutionary means. The party known as the Social-Democratic Federation, and subsequently as the British Socialist Party, made some attempt to maintain a Marxian position. But it was characteristic of that Party that one of its leaders, Hyndman, who claimed to be an orthodox Marxist, favoured a strong navy for Britain as a defence against attack by Germany. There was also the Independent Labour Party, led by MacDonald and belonging to the Second International, a party which, as Lenin explained, was "independent of socialism."

The example of the Social-Democratic parties in the larger countries was followed by those in the smaller. The Bolshevik Party was the only party in the international working class movement which systematically exposed the opportunists and pursued an undeviating policy aiming at a rupture with the opportunists within the Second International.

### *Second International Opposes the Bolsheviks*

In 1914, on the eve of the imperialist war, the following organisations existed within the working class movement and among the emigrant groups abroad: on the one hand, the Leninist Party, headed by the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P., and enjoying the support of the vast majority of the illegal organisations and the vast majority of the workers participating in the legal movement. On the other hand, and opposed to it, we have the Organisation

Committee of the Menshevik Party, based on vaguely formed initiative groups, and enjoying the whole-hearted support of the liquidators and the Bundists. These comprise the two fundamental organisations. Between them are a number of organisations, some stronger than others, some merely fictitious. Among the stronger organisations, but existing independently, are the Polish and Latvian Social-Democratic Parties. One section of the Polish Social-Democratic Party, headed by the Warsaw organisation led by Unschlicht and Hanecki, tends towards the Leninist Party; another, headed by Rosa Luxemburg, Tyszko, Markhlevski, Dzerzhinsky and Warski, tends rather towards Plekhanov, endeavours to represent the Bolsheviks as no better than the liquidators, condemns the "schismatic" tendencies of the Bolsheviks and in practice pursues a wretched semi-centrist policy. The Latvians at this time are pursuing a course very close to that of the Bolsheviks. Plekhanov has his small group of followers and his paper *Za Partiu*. Trotsky also has his small independent group, associated most closely with the liquidators, but in process of separating from them, in spite of their ideological kinship. The *Vperyod* group also continues to carry on, or rather, drag out, an independent existence.

The Menshevik liquidators, headed by their Organisation Committee, having exhausted every possible method of warfare against the Party and having suffered defeat after four-fifths of the organised workers had declared themselves in favour of the Party and the Party paper had beaten the liquidators' paper, now resorted to their last weapon against the Bolsheviks: they appealed for the mediation of the international Social-Democracy, the Second International, with the purpose of obtaining a formal condemnation of the Bolsheviks and of their tactics.

The International Socialist Bureau of the Second International agreed to take under consideration the question of the split within the Russian Party. On the very eve of the war a conference was held in Brussels to consider this question, under the chairmanship of Vandervelde and Kautsky.

All organisations calling themselves Social-Democratic parties were invited to this conference. The organisations which formerly comprised the August *Bloc* (the liquidators, Trotsky and the Bundists) re-united against the Bolsheviks and were joined by Plekhanov's group, the *Vperyod* group, and a section of the Polish

Social-Democratic Party (the group headed by Rosa Luxemburg and Tyszko).

The representatives of all the groups mentioned adopted a resolution declaring the feasibility of a union of all fractions and groups, including the liquidators. The Conference also decided to publish a manifesto urging unity and condemning the "schismatic" policy of the Bolsheviks.\*

There can be no doubt whatever that had the matter succeeded in coming under the consideration of the International Socialist Bureau, sentence of condemnation would have been passed on the Bolsheviks. Vandervelde and Kautsky had already pledged themselves in favour of the liquidators. Even Rosa Luxemburg, who at that time was carrying on a fairly bitter fight against Kautsky within the German Social-Democratic Party, joined common cause with him in condemning Lenin and the Bolsheviks. But the Second International never succeeded in passing judgment on the Bolsheviks. The World War broke out and brought with it the collapse of the Second International.

### *The Bolshevik Party on the Eve of the World War*

The years of reaction and the years of revolutionary development that preceded the world imperialist war were marked by the ruthless struggle waged by Lenin and the Bolsheviks against the opportunists and the Centrists (Trotsky). At first, this struggle was confined within the bounds of a party that was formally united, but which in fact consisted of two independent parties. It was a struggle of the Bolsheviks for the control of the Party in order to make their political policy the policy of the Party as a whole. From top to bottom, from the leading Party bodies down to the local organisations, the struggle was fought with extreme persistence and obstinacy. To the banner of the Bolsheviks rallied

\* Cf. *Correspondence Between Martov and Axelrod* At this conference were present representatives of the Organisation Committee (the August Bloc) - Axelrod, Martov, Trotsky, Chkhenskeli, Semkovsky, Batursky, Tzeitlin, A. Romanov, Zurabov, Tria-Mgeladze, Yonov and Rafev (the two latter representing the Bund); Plekhanov, representing his own group; Alexinsky, representing the *Vperyod* group, and Rosa Luxemburg, representing one of the factions of the Polish Social-Democratic Party, known as the Zazhondovists (supporters of the main tendency). The organisations enumerated comprised the anti-Bolshevik "Brussels Bloc" Upon the instructions of the C.C., Inessa Armand appeared on behalf of the Bolsheviks at the Brussels Conference

the more stable and revolutionary elements of the Russian working class, who had displayed the strength, hardihood and endurance not to capitulate to reaction, but to wage irreconcilable warfare against it; who had not surrendered to the bourgeoisie, and who possessed sufficient political realism and sober Marxian judgment of the existing situation to be able to conduct the struggle under the new conditions with new weapons, and to make use of all existing opportunities and all the gains achieved during the rising tide of the revolutionary movement.

In the course of this post-revolutionary struggle the Bolsheviks succeeded in exposing the decline of Menshevism into liquidationism as an ideological adaptation to counter-revolution, as an ideological betrayal of the revolutionary traditions of the Russian working class and as a departure from the high purposes in the name of which the Russian working class had waged the struggle of the years 1905 and 1906, a struggle which had brought it to the forefront as the vanguard of the international working class movement.

The rising tide of revolution revealed the profound abyss which lay between Bolshevism and liquidationist Menshevism. What are we fighting for? That was the question that faced both parties, and to it they gave diametrically opposite answers. Shall we fight for the old revolutionary programme of 1905, for the undiluted slogans of the first revolution; or shall we modestly plead with triumphant reaction to sacrifice itself a little and to give, under the patronage of the bourgeoisie, a certain amount of freedom to the workers, enough to permit them to organise trade unions, to write with greater latitude and to fight by parliamentary methods for partial demands after the pattern of the European reformists? For the revolutionary struggle, or against "strike fever"? For a democratic republic, or freedom of coalition? For the restoration of the old underground party, while taking advantage of every legal opportunity, or for a new legal liberal-labour party sanctioned by the tsarist government?

On the surface, the centre of dissension consisted of differences on questions of organisation—liquidationism or anti-liquidationism. Superficially, the disputes at times appear to be scholastic. But one must not lose sight of the fact that beneath these differences lay two distinct class ideologies. On the one hand, we have the interests of the working class, claiming the hegemony in the

approaching revolution. On the other hand, we have the interests of the bourgeoisie, expressing themselves in a rejection of revolution and concealing themselves beneath Marxian phraseology.

One characteristic feature particularly marks the bitter struggle between the Bolsheviks and the liquidators during the period of the rising tide of revolution, and sharply distinguishes it not only from the struggle during the preceding period of reaction but also from the struggle during the Revolution of 1905-07. The latter struggle was waged primarily between the active members of the Party, while the participation of the rank and file, and particularly of the non-Party masses was only slight.

The fact that the large and numerous organisations of the revolutionary period were now replaced by far less numerous and far more conspirative organisations naturally narrowed the scope of the struggle, the centre of which was for a time transferred abroad and to the upper strata of the small number of Party organisations that survived within Russia.

The year 1912 saw the beginnings of a widespread mass movement and the final organisational split between the Bolsheviks and the liquidators. The struggle is now waged not within a formally united party, or rather among its leaders, but between two openly hostile parties. As the movement grows, larger and larger numbers of individuals not belonging to the parties are drawn into the struggle. By their votes the latter remove the liquidators from posts in the trade unions and clubs, elect Bolsheviks in preference to liquidators to the Fourth Duma and the management bodies of the state insurance societies, etc. They read and support *Pravda*, creating for it an enormous circulation, while the liquidationist paper drags out a wretched existence on funds derived from sources alien to the working class. They strike and demonstrate on behalf of undiluted slogans and completely wreck the liquidators' campaign for a petition. Thanks to their healthy class instinct, the non-Party working class masses isolate the liquidators as a group of agents of the bourgeoisie within the working class movement, whose contacts at best are with the numerically small labour aristocracy.

The Bolsheviks in Russia, before the outbreak of the World War and the collapse of the Second International, succeeded not only in breaking with reformism and creating an entirely independent party, but also in rallying large masses of the working

class around that party. The carrying of the fight against liquidationism on to the streets in the years 1912-14 proved a fine schooling for the Russian proletariat. It steeled the Party against opportunism and thereby preserved it from the crash that overtook during the World War every large European labour party without exception. It also protected a large section of the working class from the insidious poison of social-patriotism. The European Communist Parties were obliged to form themselves out of small groups that had, under the influence of Russian Bolshevism, broken away from the Social-Democratic parties during the World War. Russia, on the other hand, had a mass proletarian party before the war, a party which had been prepared by the whole course of its previous history to adopt from the very first days of the war a correct position from the point of view of revolutionary Marxism and of the tasks of the working class in the new period of sharpened class struggle.

During these years the theories of Marxism and Leninism made considerable progress as a result of the experience gained in the revolutionary class struggle all over the world, and in Russia in particular. Lenin's work, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, raised the materialist philosophy of Marxism to a still higher level.

In examining the works of Lenin written in the period between the first revolution and the World War, one is struck by the fact that they contain all the elements of the developed analysis of imperialism which Lenin gave during the period of the World War. Lenin notes the growing importance of the trusts and other monopolist combinations, the continuous process of accumulation of capital, the impoverishment of the masses (denied by such Centrists as Kautsky), the intensification of the class struggle, the increasing resort to colonial wars and annexations by the imperialist states, including tsarist Russia, and the formation of a united front of the reactionary bourgeoisie against the revolutionary proletariat in every capitalist country.

Stalin in 1912 wrote:

"The growth of imperialism in Europe is not a chance matter. In Europe capital has become too cramped and it is striving towards new countries, seeking new markets, cheap labour and new fields of investment. But this leads to complications abroad and to wars"\*

\* Cf Stalin, "The National Question in Yugoslavia," in *Leninism*, Vol I



It is particularly important to note that already at this period Lenin (in distinction to the Centrist and "Left" writers on imperialism, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Hilferding) regards imperialist capitalism as decaying capitalism.

During this period Lenin also undertook a profoundly theoretical study of the national and colonial questions. As Stalin states:

"In analysing the events in Ireland, India, China and the Central European countries like Poland and Hungary, in their time. Marx and Engels developed the basic, initial ideas of the national and colonial question. In his works Lenin based himself on these ideas. Lenin's new contribution in this field was. a) that he gathered these ideas into one symmetrical system of views on national and colonial revolutions in the epoch of imperialism, b) that he connected the national and colonial question with the question of overthrowing imperialism, and c) that he declared the national and colonial question to be a component part of the general question of international proletarian revolution."

The period of the struggle waged against the liquidators, the period of *Zvezda* and *Pravda*, was of great importance in the history of the Russian Party. It re-knit the ties between the Party and the working class masses which had become relaxed during the years of reaction, and also created bonds between the Party and the younger sections of the working class, which had not undergone the experience of the first revolution and were establishing their first contacts with the revolutionary movement. During this period a vast number of fresh active workers and leaders came to the fore to supplement the ranks of the old cadres created during the Revolution of 1905-07. For the first time since the Party split of 1903 the reformist elements, the conveyers of bourgeois influences to the proletariat, were isolated from the mass of the workers. This prepared the Party and the Russian working class for the historical test of 1914, which not a single one of the great Social-Democratic parties of Europe stood successfully.

On the other hand, both the opportunists (liquidators) and the Centrists (Trotskyists) in Russia completely failed in their attempts to create a mass party opposed to the Bolsheviks. In the old Party the Bolsheviks formed the main body, whereas the Mensheviks, acting as the agency of the bourgeoisie, were an alien

\* Stalin, "Interview with the First American Labour Delegation in Russia," *Leninism*, Vol. I.

body, which the Party finally succeeded in ejecting at the Prague Conference. The liquidationism of the Mensheviks was essentially an attempt to destroy the old Party, in which the revolutionary Bolsheviks formed the main body, and to create a new labour party adapted to the Stolypin regime. The efforts of the liquidators, as well as of the August *Bloc* headed by Trotsky, ended in wretched failure

The rise of the new revolutionary wave of 1912-14 marked one of the most important periods in the history of the Bolshevik Party. This period witnessed the widespread development of the revolutionary struggle of vast masses of workers, mobilised around the Bolshevik Party and their old undiluted slogans of the first revolution (a democratic republic, an eight-hour working day, confiscation of the landed estates). The Party recovered from the blows of counter-revolutionary terrorism which had weakened and shattered it in the preceding period, purified itself of opportunist liquidationist contamination, and firmly steered a course towards the victory of the democratic revolution and the transformation of that revolution into a socialist revolution. The Party marched boldly forward to the great historical events that were impending

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PARTY AT THE TIME OF THE WORLD WAR AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

*Lenin's theory of imperialism—The Second International on imperialism and imperialist wars—Declaration of war and the collapse of the Second International—Lenin on the character of the war—The slogan of the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war—Work of the Bolsheviks abroad—Lenin on the victory of socialism in one single country—Consolidation of the Lefts around the Bolsheviks—The Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences—Defencists and Centrists in Russia—Party work in Russia—Elections to the War Industries Committees—A new upsurge—The Party on the eve of the February Revolution*

#### *Lenin's Theory of Imperialism*

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century revealed all the economic and political tendencies of the new, imperialist phase of capitalism, so classically described by Lenin subsequently in his work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

It would be wrong to assume that imperialism as a system took shape only on the eve of the world imperialist war. Lenin's opinion on this question is clear and unambiguous:

"During the last fifteen or twenty years, especially since the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), the economic and also the political literature of the two hemispheres has more and more often adopted the term 'imperialism' in order to define the present era."

This is the opening passage of Lenin's work on imperialism. Lenin goes on to say that the work of the English economist, J. A. Hobson, published in 1902, "gives an excellent and comprehensive description of the principal economic and political characteristics of imperialism."<sup>4</sup> At the Party Conference held in April 1917 Lenin pointed out that imperialism already existed when the Party programme was adopted in 1903.

\* Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," *Selected Works*, Vol. V.

Similarly, the programme of the Communist International declares that the era of industrial capitalism had given place to the era of imperialism by the beginning of the twentieth century.

What is the prime distinguishing feature of imperialism? It is that the concentration of production reaches an extreme pitch and assumes the character of a monopoly.

"For Europe," Lenin says, "the time when the new capitalism was *definitely* substituted for the old can be established fairly precisely: it was the beginning of the twentieth century"

Imperialism is monopoly capitalism:

"The boom at the end of the nineteenth century and the crisis of 1900-03. Cartels become one of the foundations of the whole economic life. Capitalism has been transformed into imperialism." \*

The bourgeois, followed by the Social-Democratic opportunists, endeavoured to represent monopoly capitalism as "organised" capitalism, and as marking the end of crises and of anarchy in production. This apologia of imperialism, this new form of Struveism, as reflected in the works of Hilferding and later of Bukharin, was sternly resisted by Lenin from the very outset.

"The statement that cartels can abolish crises is a fable spread by bourgeois economists, who at all costs desire to place capitalism in a favourable light. On the contrary, when monopoly appears in *certain* branches of industry, it increases and intensifies the anarchy inherent in capitalist production *as a whole*. The disparity between the development of agriculture and that of industry which is characteristic of capitalism is increased." \*

The new capitalism, *i.e.*, imperialism, bears "obvious features of something transitory, which is a mixture of free competition and monopoly."

"Free competition is the fundamental attribute of capitalism, and of commodity production generally. Monopoly is exactly the opposite of free competition, but we have seen the latter being transformed into monopoly before our very eyes, creating large-scale industry and eliminating small industry, replacing large-scale industry by still larger-scale industry, finally leading to such a concentration of production and capital that monopoly has been and is the result: cartels, syndicates and trusts, and merging with them, a dozen or so banks manipulating thousands of millions. At the same time monopoly, which has grown out of free competition, does not abolish the latter, but exists alongside it, and hovers over it, as it were, and, as a result, gives

\* *Ib:d*

rise to a number of very acute antagonisms, friction and conflicts" <sup>1</sup>

In the period of imperialism colossal importance is assumed by the banks, which become all-powerful monopolies practically controlling the finances of all the capitalists and small owners, as well as a large part of the means of production and sources of raw material of the given country and of a number of other countries

The amalgamation of bank capital with industrial capital gives rise to finance capital

"The supremacy of finance capital over all other forms of capital means the rule of the *rentier* and of the financial oligarchy, it means the crystallisation of a small number of financially 'powerful' states from among all the rest." <sup>1</sup>

"Under the old type of capitalism, when free competition prevailed, the export of *goods* was the most typical feature. Under modern capitalism, when monopolies prevail, the export of *capital* has become the typical feature." <sup>\*</sup>

Owing to the uneven and irregular manner in which capitalism develops, surpluses of capital tend to accumulate in individual undertakings, branches of industry and countries, particularly in the more developed countries, and these surpluses seek a field of investment

"It goes without saying," Lenin wrote, "that if capitalism could develop agriculture, which today lags far behind industry everywhere, if it could raise the standard of living of the masses, who are everywhere still poverty-stricken and underfed in spite of the amazing advance in technical knowledge, there could be no talk of a superfluity of capital. . . . But if capitalism did these things it would not be capitalism, for uneven development and wretched conditions of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and premises of this mode of production" <sup>\*</sup>

"Monopolist capitalist combines—cartels, syndicates, trusts—divide among themselves, first of all, the whole internal market of a country and impose their control, more or less completely, upon the industry of that country. But under capitalism the home market is inevitably bound up with the foreign market. Capitalism long ago created a world market. As the export of capital increased, and as the foreign and colonial relations, the 'spheres of influence' of the big monopolist combines, expanded, things tended 'naturally' towards an international agreement among these combines and towards the formation of international cartels." <sup>\*</sup>

Does that mean that the struggle between the capitalist countries is ceasing and that the conditions are being created under

<sup>\*</sup> *Ibid.*

capitalism for world peace? Such was the conclusion arrived at prior to the war by Kautsky and those who shared his views. Lenin rejects it most emphatically.

"Theoretically, this opinion is absurd, while in practice it is a sophism and a dishonest defence of the worst opportunism. International cartels show to what point capitalist monopolies have developed, and they *reveal the object of the struggle between the various capitalist groups . . . for the forms of the struggle may and do vary in accordance with varying, relatively particular, and transitory causes, but the essence of the struggle, its class content, cannot change while classes exist.*"\*

With the onset of the era of imperialism the territorial division of the world between the great capitalist powers comes to an end. Thereupon begins a most bitter struggle for the redivision of a world which is already divided up

"Colonial policy and imperialism existed before this latest stage of capitalism, and even before capitalism. . . . But 'general' arguments about imperialism, which ignore, or put into the background, the fundamental differences of social-economic systems, inevitably degenerate into absolutely empty banalities, or into grandiloquent comparisons like 'Greater Rome and Greater Britain.' Even the colonial policy of capitalism in its *previous* stages is essentially different from the colonial policy of finance capital.

"The principal feature of modern capitalism is the domination of monopolist combines of the big capitalists. These monopolies are most durable when *all* the sources of raw materials are controlled by the one group. And we have seen with what zeal the international capitalist combines exert every effort to make it impossible for their rivals to compete with them; for example, by tying up mineral lands, oil fields, etc. Colonial possession alone gives complete guarantee of success to the monopolies against all the risks of the struggle with competitors. . . . The more capitalism develops, the more the need for raw materials arises, the more bitter competition becomes and the more feverishly the hunt for raw materials proceeds all over the world, the more desperate becomes the struggle for the acquisition of colonies."\*\*

Hence, according to Lenin, the main peculiarities of imperialism are:

"1) the concentration of production and capital, developed to such a stage that it creates monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life, 2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital and

\* *Ibid.*

\*\* *Ibid*

the creation, on the basis of 'finance capital,' of a financial oligarchy; 3) the export of capital, which has become extremely important, as distinguished from the export of commodities, 4) the formation of international capitalist monopolies which share the world among themselves, 5) the territorial division of the whole world among the greatest powers is completed." \*

Capitalism was transformed into imperialism at the stage of its development when the monopoly of finance capital became dominant, when the export of capital assumed extreme importance and when the whole earth had been divided among the great capitalist countries. The race for armaments seizes upon all states as a result of the struggle for markets and sources of raw material, the endeavour to expand the territory they exploit, and the race for super-profits. The conditions leading to world war mature within capitalist society.

Lenin points out yet another feature of modern imperialism. Imperialism is not only the period of monopoly capitalism, it is also the period of *decaying* capitalism, decay resulting from its monopolist character.

"... the *tendency* to stagnation and decay, which is the feature of monopoly, continues, and in certain branches of industry, in certain countries, for certain periods of time, it becomes predominant." \*\*

The tendency to decay and become parasitic, characteristic of modern imperialism, finds its reflection in the working class movement, since the gigantic super-profits it extorts enable the bourgeoisie to bribe the labour leaders and a thin stratum of the upper working class aristocracy.

This process made itself apparent in England much earlier than in other countries.

"... for two important features of imperialism were observed in Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century, *viz*, vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in world markets Marx and Engels systematically traced this relation between opportunism in the labour movement and the imperialistic features of British capitalism for several decades." \*\*\*

For the greater mass of the workers, as distinct from the thin stratum of labour aristocrats, imperialism means the intensifica-

\* *Ib:d.*

\*\* *Ibid*  
... ..

tion of economic and political oppression, the lowering of the standard of living, unemployment, poverty and physical extermination in imperialist wars.

"The distinctive feature of the present situation [as distinct from the situation of England in the second half of the nineteenth century —N P] is the prevalence of economic and political conditions which could not but increase the irreconcilability between opportunism and the general and vital interests of the working class movement. Embryonic imperialism has grown into a dominant system, capitalist monopolies occupy first place in economics and politics, the division of the world has been completed. On the other hand, instead of an undisputed monopoly by Britain, we see a few imperialist powers disputing among themselves for the right to share in this monopoly, and this struggle is characteristic of the whole period of the beginning of the twentieth century. Opportunism, therefore, cannot now triumph in the working class movement of any country for decades as it did in England in the second half of the nineteenth century. But in a number of countries it has grown ripe, over-ripe and rotten, and has become completely merged with bourgeois policy in the form of 'social-chauvinism'."

### *The Second International on Imperialism and Imperialist Wars*

Under imperialism the antagonisms within the capitalist system reach an extreme state of acuteness. The era of imperialism is the eve of the socialist revolution. We have already stated that when the split began within the Russian Social-Democratic Party the Left elements of the so-called orthodox Marxian movement in Western Europe sided with the Mensheviks. The situation somewhat changed during the first revolution. A new era began

As Lenin wrote in 1913:

"The 'peaceful' period of 1872-1904 has gone completely, never to return. High cost of living and the pressure of the trusts is causing an unprecedented intensification of the economic struggle, which has roused even the British workers, who are most of all corrupted by liberalism. Before our eyes, a political crisis is maturing even in the 'diehard,' bourgeois-Junker country, Germany. Owing to the feverish race for armaments and the policy of imperialism, the 'social peace' of modern Europe is more like a barrel of gunpowder." \*\*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*

\*\* Lenin, "The Historical Destiny of the Teaching of Karl Marx," *Marx, Engels, Marxism*.



In 1909, Rudolf Hilferding, one of the most prominent of the theoreticians of the German and Austrian Social-Democratic parties, published his important work *Finance Capital*. This book regards imperialism, which is tied up with finance capital, as a new phase in the development of capitalism, but ignores the decay which capitalism undergoes in this new, imperialist phase. As Lenin points out, this book, apart from committing a number of theoretical errors, is characteristic of the tendency to reconcile opportunism and Marxism. This is expressed, for instance, in the attempt to regard monopoly capitalism as organised capitalism, which has overcome competition.

In reality, Hilferding in this book laid the foundations for a political economy of social-fascism.

During the war Hilferding occupied a Centrist position and worked hand in glove with Kautsky.

The greatest figure among the German Lefts was without doubt Rosa Luxemburg. To her credit must be laid the services she rendered at this period in the struggle both against the opportunists and against the Centrists, including Kautsky.

But even her position was far from being a consistently revolutionary and Marxian one; it was in essence a semi-Menshevik, a semi-Centrist position.

Rosa Luxemburg in effect denied Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and advanced instead her own theory of permanent revolution which was shared by Trotsky.

Hence her rejection of the Leninist slogan of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, which is an organic corollary of Lenin's doctrine of the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution. While she dissociated herself from the Mensheviks during the period of the first revolution, Rosa Luxemburg did not adopt the Bolshevik position, although she supported the Bolsheviks on a number of questions of tactics.

As we have pointed out, during the Revolution of 1905 Rosa Luxemburg, together with the Polish and Lithuanian Party, of which she was the leader, disapproved of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, in which Lenin already discerned the embryo of the organs of revolutionary power (hence the errors later committed by Rosa Luxemburg in her attitude towards the

Soviet government as a form of proletarian dictatorship and towards the concrete policy of the Soviet government).

Rosa Luxemburg never understood Lenin's doctrine of the hegemony of the proletariat in the struggle for the emancipation of all the oppressed, and particularly of the peasantry of subject nations. Hence her mistaken attitude on the peasant and national questions, to which we have had frequent occasion to refer.

Finally, we cannot overlook the false theory of imperialism created by Rosa Luxemburg, which dissociated imperialism from a number of its fundamental features (monopoly and decay, the domination of finance capital, etc.). Rosa Luxemburg pictured the collapse of capitalism as a consequence which would follow automatically from the exhaustion of foreign markets. This mechanistic theory was accompanied by an underestimation of the necessity for revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat in order to overthrow capitalism, and an overestimation of spontaneous action. She failed to appreciate the role of the Party and disapproved of the Bolshevik theory of the Party as the organiser of revolution and armed insurrection. She accused the Bolsheviks of Blanquism. The group of Lefts which Rosa Luxemburg headed in Germany was a typical group of writers. The Lefts failed to create an organisation, made no serious effort to conquer the Party machine and win over the rank and file, and contented themselves with the role of literary opposition assigned them by the Centrist leadership of the Party.

Dissension in the Marxian camp in Germany began to become acute in the years 1910-11 Kautsky completely broke with Rosa Luxemburg and the other Lefts, differing with them on important questions, particularly regarding the struggle against imperialism and the future tactics of the Social-Democrats in view of the increasing contradictions of imperialism and the growing acuteness of the class struggle. Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg, Pannekoek, Radek and Lentsch insisted that imperialism would inevitably lead to war, that nothing could be done to prevent that war, since it was a natural and unavoidable product of the growing acuteness of capitalist contradictions. The war would lead to an extreme crisis of capitalism. In view of these prospects, it was the duty of the German Social-Democrats to prepare the ground in Germany for the application of the methods employed by the Russians in 1905-07; all the efforts of the

Party must be directed towards the political strike, in which the participation not only of Party members and trade unionists must be secured, but also of the broad masses of the unorganised proletariat. The German Lefts did not raise the question of armed uprising.

Kautsky was definitely opposed to this point of view. His opinion was that an imperialist war was not inevitable and that the antagonisms of imperialism could be reconciled. The Social-Democrats must help to achieve such a reconciliation and must agitate for a reduction in armaments. Kautsky publicly still did not reject the social revolution and the necessity for the seizure of power on the part of the working class; but he insisted that the period of peace would continue, that the Party had no reason to prepare itself for an approaching catastrophe, and no reason to arm itself. In this way Kautsky and the Social-Democratic Kautskyist Centre played into the hands of the German bourgeoisie, with the result that the war found the working class masses totally unprepared.

War was approaching. The political history of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century was marked by the development of colonial antagonisms: the partition of colonies which had remained unannexed, the suppression of colonial revolts and colonial wars between the powers. The formation of the groups of powers that were within a few years to come into armed collision was in the main completed: on the one hand was the Triple Alliance, consisting of Germany, Austria and Italy (as we know, on the outbreak of war in 1914 Italy deserted the Triple Alliance and subsequently joined its antagonists), while on the other was the Dual Alliance consisting of France and Russia. In 1912 a war broke out between the four Balkan States, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, on the one hand, and Turkey (provoked into the war by the French, Russian and British diplomats), on the other.

Not long prior to this the Entente Cordiale was definitely formed. Great Britain concluded a secret military treaty with France undertaking to support her in the event of attack by Germany. In the Balkan war the four Balkan states were supported by the Entente against Turkey, which was supported by Germany and Austria. In the following year the four Allies fell out among themselves over the division of the Turkish booty.

From year to year the race for armaments among the great powers became more and more feverish.

Finally, in 1914, the world imperialist war broke out, caused by the systematic growth of imperialist antagonisms: the rivalry between Great Britain and Germany, the conflict of French and German interests, the conflict of the economic interests of Russian and German capitalists and Russian and German landlords, the desire of the militarist feudal imperialists of Russia to seize control of the Dardanelles in furtherance of their mercantile interests, national conflicts that could find no solution, the oppression of small nationalities in Eastern and Central Europe and in the colonies and, finally, by the growing menace to the bourgeoisie of a proletarian revolution.

In the autumn of 1912 the Bâle Congress of the Second International, specially summoned to discuss ways and means of preventing the threatened outbreak of war, had declared in its manifesto:

“Let the governments not forget that the Franco-Prussian war led to the revolutionary outburst of the Commune, that the Russo-Japanese war brought into action the revolutionary forces of the nationalities inhabiting Russia. . . . Proletarians consider it a crime to shoot each other in the interests of capitalist profits, the rivalries of dynasties, and secret diplomatic treaties.”

But the warning remained an empty one. Opportunism, which had taken such firm root in the parties of the Second International long before the outbreak of the war, led to the triumph of social-chauvinism within the ranks of those parties. The long period of peaceful capitalist development, accompanied by the parliamentary triumphs of the Social-Democrats, the growth of trade unionism, and a certain improvement achieved by the latter in the conditions of the higher-paid sections of the workers, gave rise to a delusion among the skilled workers that capitalism would develop into socialism peaceably. This delusion was taken advantage of by the revisionists in order to strengthen the influence of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat and to justify their liquidationist attitude towards the views of Marx and Engels. Imperialism provided the bourgeoisie with a powerful means not only of strengthening the whole machinery of economic and spiritual subjection of the proletariat, but also of systematically and deliberately bribing the labour aristocracy

(by means of higher wages, etc.), from whose ranks were recruited the leaders of the working class movement. Thus, the aggravation of class antagonisms in the era of imperialism, while strengthening the revolutionary tendencies within the working class movement which remained true to the traditions of Marx, at the same time extended the basis of revisionism and of its transformation into direct social renegacy.

*Declaration of War and the Collapse of the  
Second International*

Upon the outbreak of the war the vast majority of the leaders and officials of the Social-Democratic parties and of the trade unions, as well as the parliamentary fractions in Germany, France and Austria came out as social-chauvinists. The whole press and apparatus of the parties and unions were brought into action to influence the working class masses and to assist the ruling classes in dragging the proletariat into the imperialist war. The great majority of the Social-Democratic leaders revealed themselves as open social-chauvinists, calling for the defence of the bourgeois fatherland, for civil peace within the country and for the fullest possible support of the war. They conducted a bitter campaign of enmity towards the "external foe." The war, started by the bourgeoisie for its own predatory purposes, was represented by the social-chauvinists as being fought on behalf of a noble, a national, even a revolutionary cause. The German Social-Democrats declared that they were fighting tsarist Russia in fulfilment of the behests of Marx and Engels, and that they were fighting Britain because her capitalism was far more backward and conservative than the German. The destruction of the British monopoly, by opening foreign markets for German industrial goods, would facilitate the economic development of Germany, improve the position of the working class, and thus hasten the advent of socialism. For the sake of these future benefits the working class was called upon patiently to endure the hardships of war, the rising cost of living, the scarcity of goods, increased exploitation and the restriction of trade union and political rights. For the sake of these benefits the workers must sacrifice their lives without a murmur to the Moloch of imperialism. The French, Belgian and British social-chauvinists

were no less zealous than the German, and the Russian liquidators hastened to follow their example. They declared that the Entente (with the active assistance of the tsarist government) was waging the war in defence of freedom and democracy against German imperialism and militarism and against the Hohenzollern monarchy. The social-chauvinists of both imperialist camps did not hesitate to exploit in the most shameless manner the democratic and socialist sentiments of the proletarian masses in the interests of their masters, the magnates of capital.

In the very first days of the war, Kautsky declared that the war had not been foreseen by the Second International and that the latter was an instrument of peace and not of war. Not having foreseen the war the Second International was powerless to do anything. Therefore, let each party act as the interests of the proletariat of its country demanded. At the present moment, Kautsky declared, every party was acting rightly in defending its fatherland, since the latter was menaced by destruction, from which the proletariat primarily would suffer. When the war ended the Second International could again be restored and again become an instrument of peace.

Franz Mehring's reply to the sage arguments of Kautsky was very brief: he called him a "*Madchen für alle*"—a common prostitute. Such was the appraisal given by the Left wing of the policy of the Centrists, who in practice in no way differed from the confessed social-chauvinists.

In the German Social-Democratic Party only among the Left wing, which had foreseen and foretold the World War, were voices raised against it, although certain of the Lefts (*e.g.*, Lentsch and Parvus) deserted to the social-chauvinists. The anti-war Lefts organised a group known as the *International* and began to publish their own journal under the editorship of, among others, Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin. But the Lefts still could not make up their minds to split away and form their own independent party. The traditions of the Second International were still too strong.

It has already been stated that even before the war all proposals of the Lefts to activate the tactics of the German Social-Democratic Party, in view of the increased activity of the masses at a time when imperialist antagonisms were becoming ever more acute and the danger of war more menacing, always met with the

support of the Russian Bolsheviks, who welcomed every attack of the Lefts on the Centrists and opportunists. This applied in particular to the propaganda of the Lefts for a general strike and street demonstrations, and their advocacy of work among the troops and young recruits. The Bolsheviks fully shared the views of the Lefts regarding the inevitability of the imperialist war, views which were disputed by Kautsky.\*

Several months prior to the outbreak of the war, M. N. Pokrovsky wrote an article in the Bolshevik theoretical journal *Prosvestcheniye* regarding the inevitability of war. Pokrovsky pointed to the rivalry between Britain and Germany and between Russia and Germany as the basic factor in the impending war. On the other hand, the Menshevik expert on war and imperialism, Weltmann-Pavlovich,\*\* attempted to show that war was very improbable, that there were too many common interests between the capitalists of the various countries (Germany and Britain, in particular), and so forth. In the dissension between the Lefts and the Centrists within the German Social-Democratic Party, the Russian Mensheviks gave their full support to the Centrists. Apart from Russia, the strongest socialist anti-war movement among the European countries participating in the war was to be found in Germany. In other countries (France, Britain, Austria) the anti-war movement was limited to individual protests. In little Serbia alone, attacked though she was by her powerful Austrian neighbour, the majority of the Party courageously came out against the war and against the voting of war credits.

### *Lenin on the Character of the War*

The Bolsheviks alone from the very outset of the war took up a consistent revolutionary Marxist position against the imperialist war, against the bourgeoisie which had started the war, and against the socialists who had gone over to the side of the bourgeoisie. The Central Committee issued its famous manifesto

\* However, the World War demonstrated how far even the German Lefts, who were undoubtedly the best section within the Second International, fell short of the Russian Bolsheviks in the application of the doctrines of Marx and Engels to the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution.

\*\* Died recently In 1918 he joined the Russian Bolshevik Party

against war, in which was expounded, with far greater determination and consistency than was the case with the Left wing of the German Social-Democratic Party, the revolutionary attitude towards war, the nature of war, and the tactics that should be pursued by the working class during the war

The consistently revolutionary and Marxist attitude adopted by the Bolsheviks towards the war from its very outbreak followed from the whole history of the Party and from the merciless struggle which the Russian Bolsheviks had waged for years against opportunism and all forms of compromise with opportunism, both within their own country and in the international arena.

We have already adduced sufficient facts to prove that Bolshevism, the revolutionary Marxism of the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, had from its very inception pursued a policy of determined hostility towards opportunism, since the Bolsheviks always considered that a rupture with opportunism was inevitable.

In those countries in which the Lefts, during the interval between the first Russian revolution and the World War, had favoured a rupture with the opportunists (Holland and Italy), they met with the full support of the Bolsheviks. Writing in reference to the expulsion of the Rights from the Italian Socialist Party at the congress held in Reggio Emilia in 1912, Lenin said:

"A split is a serious and painful matter; but at times it is inevitable, and in such cases any display of weakness . . . is a crime . . . The party of the Italian socialist proletariat, by removing the syndicalists and the Right reformists from its midst, has entered the right path." \*

When, somewhat earlier, a split occurred in the Dutch Socialist Party and the Lefts broke away, Lenin publicly pilloried the International Socialist Bureau which supported the opportunist Party leadership as against the Lefts. In May 1908, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Marx, Lenin wrote:

"What we are frequently experiencing at present only in the domain of ideology, disputes about theoretical amendments to Marx, what at

\* Lenin, "The Congress of the Italian Socialists," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVI.



present leaks out in practice only in individual particular issues of the labour movement such as tactical differences with revisionists and splits on this basis—all this the working class will without fail still have to go through on an incomparably bigger scale, when the proletarian revolution will sharpen all questions at issue and concentrate all differences on points of immediate importance for determining the conduct of the masses, and in the heat of the fight will make it necessary to separate enemies from friends, to throw out the bad allies for the purpose of dealing decisive blows at the enemy.

“The ideological struggle of revolutionary Marxism against revisionism at the end of the nineteenth century is but the prelude to the great revolutionary battles of the proletariat that marches forward to the complete victory of its cause, despite all the hesitations and weaknesses of philistinism.” \*

The World War rendered the socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries a question of practical moment. The opportunists and the Centrists of the Second International openly deserted to the class enemy. The Manifesto of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P. exposed the imperialist character of the war in precise and unambiguous terms. That the war was an imperialist war now appears to us obvious and indisputable. But at that time such was not the case. We must recall that several years prior to the declaration of war Kautsky wrote declaring that imperialist wars were not necessarily a product of capitalism, that imperialism could be avoided, and that, moreover, an entirely peaceable and innocuous imperialism, or ultra-imperialism, was possible, under which the capitalist states of the world would come to a peaceable agreement among themselves regarding the joint exploitation of the world. By such arguments Kautsky prepared a large section of the Social-Democrats for the open adoption of social-chauvinism. The refusal to admit the imperialist character of the war served as a theoretical justification of the support the Social-Democrats gave to the war. Only a very few of the social-patriots had the hardihood to admit the imperialist character of the war. Only a few bold people, such as Cunow, one of the most prominent opportunist theoreticians of the German Social-Democrats, possessed the deplorable courage to declare that the war must be supported in spite of its imperialist character, since imperialism was an inevitable phase in the development of capitalism. Such bold individuals among the social-chauvinists were few; it was not an argument to offer

\* Lenin, “Marxism and Revisionism,” *Marx, Engels, Marxism*.

to the masses. The vast majority of Social-Democrats tried to justify their treachery, their desertion and capitulation to the bourgeoisie in supporting the war, by the assertion that the war was not an imperialist war. It was, they declared, a national war, waged in defence of the fatherland, for the preservation of the national existence, and for the emancipation of oppressed nationalities.

The Socialists of the Entente countries especially argued that the war was being fought on behalf of oppressed nationalities, that it was a war to end war. The Socialists displayed not an ounce of originality, for it was an argument the imperialist governments themselves had thought of before them.

When the war broke out the Russian government, through the commander-in-chief of the forces, issued a manifesto to the Poles promising to restore the Polish state, although, of course, under the aegis of the Russian tsar. The intention was to annex Posnania and Galicia to the tsarist empire. Naturally, the Austrian and German commanders-in-chief addressed similar manifestoes to their own Poles. Both coalitions—the Entente and the Central Powers—endeavoured not to lag behind each other. The Entente officially declared that its aim was to emancipate the oppressed subjects of Germany and Austria, the Poles, Czecho-Slovaks, etc. Austria and Germany declared for the emancipation of India and Ireland. All the governments endeavoured to represent their aims in the war as anything but the advancement of their own imperialist interests.

Our Party, however, emphasised the imperialist character of the war from the very outset. It declared that it was a predatory war, waged by the capitalists for the sake of colonies, for markets, and for the partition of the world. Such a war was not entitled to the support of the working class. The correct attitude towards the war was defined in the point introduced by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg into the resolution of the Stuttgart Congress, declaring that if the outbreak of the war cannot be averted, then the revolutionary Social-Democrats must exert every effort to use the war situation for revolutionary purposes. From this Lenin and the manifesto of the Russian Party drew a direct and plain conclusion: the imperialist war must be transformed into a civil war.

*The Slogan of the Transformation of the Imperialist War  
into Civil War*

On this point revolutionary Marxism definitely dissociated itself from pacifism. Upon the outbreak of the war many a bourgeois pacifist declared himself opposed to it on the grounds of humanitarianism. It would appear that the revolutionary Social-Democrats might also have associated themselves with the humanitarian plea against the war and in favour of disarmament and universal peace. But the Bolshevik Party had no desire to deceive the working class by holding out prospects of the imperialists disarming. On the contrary, the Party insisted that at a moment when the bourgeoisie in pursuit of its own interests was compelled to arm millions of workers and peasants, it would be folly for the masses to abandon the arms they had received from the very hands of the bourgeoisie. These arms must be turned against the bourgeoisie; and the imperialist war, a war in which the proletarians were being compelled to destroy each other, must be transformed into a civil war for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, the proletariat must first turn its weapons against the bourgeoisie of its own country. Years before the outbreak of the World War Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* had declared: "The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got," and that "the proletariat of each country must first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie." From this it followed that, having been dragged into the imperialist war, the working class must turn its attention to its own bourgeoisie, and, even when chauvinism was at its height, it must attack the enemy within its own country, as Karl Liebknecht later was wont to express it.

Another conclusion also followed inevitably from the slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war, *viz.*, that for the working class of Russia the defeat of tsarism must be considered the least of evils. Obviously, the more powerful the revolutionary movement within the country against the government which was engaged in the imperialist war, the more it would tend to enfeeble that government. And the more the government became enfeebled, the sooner was it likely to be defeated. Hence, it followed that defeat was not a thing to be feared. That was the crux of the difference between the tactics

of the Russian Bolshevik Party and the tactics of the opportunist Social-Democratic parties. The whole argument of the Social-Democrats in justification of participation in the war was intended to inspire the working class with fear that their bourgeois fatherland might suffer defeat. They declared that military defeat would affect all classes of society, including the proletariat. Therefore, no matter how much to blame the government might be, the proletariat must exert every effort to prevent defeat and to assist the defence of the country; and since it was a bourgeois government that was undertaking the defence of the country, it was obvious that the proletariat must in every way support that bourgeois government in the war and, consequently, must abandon the class struggle.

In order to leave no doubt as to the falsity and deception of this position, it had to be declared plainly and unambiguously that there was no terror in defeat, that the defeat of its own government in the war was for the proletariat the lesser evil. Such a position alone offered the possibility of developing the revolutionary struggle to the utmost in every country, by creating the firm determination that everywhere, in every country engaged in the war, the imperialist war must be transformed into civil war. In order to wage a revolutionary struggle against war the fear of defeat had to be overcome. From this point of view the socialist internationalists in every country had to be defeatists. Defeatism, in Lenin's opinion, was the natural and indisputable duty particularly of the Russian Socialists, who were compelled to carry on their activities in a country which furnished a classic example of the most savage and barbarous social and national oppression.

Another very important point in the manifesto followed from the appraisal of the imperialist phase of capitalism given by the Russian Bolshevik Party, and in part by the Left wing of the European Marxists. Even Rudolf Hilferding in his *Finance Capital*, written at a time when he was already a finished Centrist, declared that only socialism can be set up against imperialism, and that the time had arrived when the direct transition to socialism had become the immediate aim of the working class struggle. Kautsky had written very much on the same lines in his book *The Road to Power*. But that about which the leaders of the Second International in their finer moments had dared to

write only in an academic spirit, had been transformed by the war into an immediate and practical task and a question of life or death for the working class of every belligerent country. Hence followed the call issued by the manifesto of the Russian Bolsheviks for a direct revolutionary struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat in the more advanced of the capitalist countries. As to the countries, such as Russia, in which the bourgeois revolution had not yet been completed, the manifesto as a first step laid upon the Party the duty of fighting as hitherto for a democratic republic, an eight-hour working day, the confiscation of the estates of the landlords and the right of self-determination of all nationalities. The democratic revolution, and its triumph, was to be a stage towards the socialist revolution. About a year after the outbreak of the war, Lenin, in his article "Two Lines of the Revolution" defined the tasks of the Party in Russia as follows:

"The proletariat is fighting, and will fight valiantly, to capture power, for a republic, for the confiscation of the land, *i e*, for winning over the peasantry, for making *full* use of its revolutionary powers, for the participation of '*non-proletarian* masses of the people' in freeing *bourgeois* Russia from *military-feudal* '*imperialism*' (tsarism). And the proletariat will immediately utilise this liberation of bourgeois Russia from tsarism, from the agrarian power of the landlords, not to aid the rich peasants in their struggle against the rural worker, but to bring about the socialist revolution in alliance with the proletariat of Europe." \*

In the manifesto of the Party, as well as in other documents, and in articles by Lenin, we find a detailed appraisal of the character of opportunism and Centrism. Thus, Lenin writes:

"The crisis created by the war has exposed the real substance of opportunism, revealing it in the role of a direct aid to the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. The so-called Social-Democratic '*Centre*,' headed by Kautsky, has in reality rolled down to opportunism completely, covering this up by hypocritical phrases that are particularly harmful, and by falsifications of Marxism that turn it into imperialism." \*\*

### *Work of the Bolsheviks Abroad*

After the declaration of war, the external conditions under which the C.C. of the Russian Party was obliged to carry on its

\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. V

\*\* Lenin, "Conference of Foreign Sections of R S D L P.," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII.

work became exceedingly complicated and difficult. In the period immediately prior to the war the C.C., headed by Lenin, had maintained its headquarters in Cracow, whence it guided the work of the Party, the fraction within the Duma, *Pravda*, and so forth. Party workers continually came to Cracow to discuss matters with the C.C. But when the war broke out Lenin was immediately arrested by the Austrian government. An attempt was made to accuse him of espionage, but he was soon released. Thereupon the C.C. transferred to Geneva. It thus became cut off from the political life not only of Russia, but of all the chief belligerent European countries. This, however, did not hinder the C.C. from developing considerable activity in guiding the Party work within Russia and also in consolidating the Left elements of the disrupted Second International with the purpose of creating a Third International.

In February 1915, at a conference of Socialists of the Entente countries held in London, the representative of the Russian Party, Maximovich (Litvinov), uttered a vigorous protest against social-chauvinism and retired from the conference. About this time too a conference of the groups organised abroad to assist the R.S.D.L.P. was held in Berne. The Berne Conference gave final formulation to the views of the Party on the subject of the character of the war, the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war, the direct struggle for the seizure of power by the working class of the advanced countries, etc. Somewhat later a pamphlet appeared written by Lenin and Zinoviev entitled *Socialism and War*, which presented a circumstantial and popular analysis of the causes which led to the collapse of the Second International, dissected the attitude of the Second International towards war in the past and in the present and expounded the attitude of the Russian Party towards the war.

The representatives of the Second International attempted to justify their policy of "defence of the fatherland" by representing the war as bearing a national character. They backed their treacherous views by references to Marx and Engels, recalling the attitude of Marx and Engels towards the national wars of the previous century. In *Socialism and War*, Lenin and Zinoviev showed that such arguments were false, that Marx and Engels favoured national wars, but that was in a different epoch and that the present war was an imperialist war.

In connection with the Berne Conference, and partially at the Conference itself, the Russian Party found it necessary to define its attitude towards two questions of great importance not merely during the period of the war, but also for the whole subsequent tactics of the International, namely, the slogan of a United States of Europe and the question of the establishment of socialism in one single country in connection with the law of the uneven development of capitalism.

### *Lenin on the Victory of Socialism in One Single Country*

The slogan of a republican United States of Europe was put forward in the Central Committee's manifesto on war. Lenin gives the following appraisal of this slogan:

"Political changes of a truly democratic nature, and especially political revolutions, can never, under any circumstances, obscure or weaken the slogan of the socialist revolution. On the contrary, they always bring it nearer, widen the basis for it, draw ever new strata of the petty bourgeoisie and the semi-proletarian masses into the socialist struggle. On the other hand, political revolutions are inevitable in the course of the socialist revolution, which must not be regarded as being a single act, but must be regarded as an epoch of turbulent political and economic upheavals, of the most acute class struggle, civil war, revolutions and counter-revolutions.

"But while the United States of Europe slogan, raised in connection with the revolutionary overthrow of the three most reactionary monarchies of Europe, headed by Russia, is quite invulnerable as a political slogan, the important question of its economic content and meaning still remains. From the point of view of the economic conditions of imperialism, *i.e.*, capital exports and partition of the world among the 'progressive' and 'civilised' colonial powers, the United States of Europe is either impossible or reactionary under capitalism. . . .

"A United States of Europe under capitalism is tantamount to an agreement to divide up the colonies. Under capitalism, however, no other basis, no other principle of division is possible except force. A billionaire cannot share the 'national income' of a country with anyone except in proportion to the capital invested (with an extra bonus thrown in, so that the largest capital may receive more than its due). . . .

"Of course, *temporary* agreements between capitalists and between powers are possible. In this sense, the United States of Europe is possible as an agreement between the *European* capitalists . . . but what for? Only for the purpose of jointly protecting colonial booty *against* Japan and America, which feel badly treated by the present division of colonies, and which, for the last half century, have grown infinitely faster than backward, monarchist Europe, which is beginning to decay with

age. In comparison with the United States of America, Europe as a whole implies economic stagnation. On the present economic basis, *i.e.*, under capitalism, the United States of Europe would mean the organisation of reaction to retard the more rapid development of America."<sup>1</sup>

Arguing the necessity for the rejection of the slogan of a United States of Europe, Lenin, disputing with Trotsky, uttered a number of thoughts of extreme profundity and of historical significance on the subject of the uneven development of capitalism, the snapping of the weakest link in the imperialist chain, and the establishment of socialism in one country alone.

"The United States of the World (not of Europe alone) is a state form of national federation and national freedom which we connect with socialism—until the complete victory of communism brings about the total disappearance of the state, including the democratic state. [By the democratic state Lenin is here referring to a proletarian state—*N.P.*] As a separate slogan, however, the slogan United States of the World would hardly be a correct one, first because it merges with socialism, second, because it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the victory of socialism in a single country is impossible; it may also create misconceptions as to the relations of such a country to others."

And Lenin goes on to say

"Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible, first in a few or even in one single capitalist country taken separately. The victorious proletariat of the country, having expropriated the capitalists and organised its own socialist production, would rise *against* the rest of the capitalist world, attract to itself the oppressed classes of other countries, raise revolts among them against the capitalists, and, in the event of necessity, come out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states. The political form of society in which the proletariat is victorious, in which it has overthrown the bourgeoisie, will be a democratic republic, which will more and more centralise the forces of the proletariat of the given nation, or nations, in the struggle against the states that have not yet gone over to socialism. The abolition of classes is impossible without the dictatorship of the proletariat. The free federation of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states" \*\*

Marx and Engels were of the opinion that the socialist revolution could be successful only if it took place simultaneously in several capitalist countries. This thought was expressed by Engels

\* Lenin, "The United States of Europe Slogan," *Selected Works*, Vol. V.

\*\* *Ibid.*



in his *Principles of Communism* written before the Revolution of 1848.

Engels, too, after the revolution, examining the prospects of a war between France and the "Holy Alliance" in the event of the power of government passing into the hands of the French proletariat, came to the conclusion that revolutionary France would be helpless against a counter-revolutionary military coalition, which, in his opinion, would inevitably arise if the revolution were to triumph in one country alone.

Monopoly capitalism aggravated the unevenness of economic development within the various countries. Hence the unevenness in the development of the revolutionary movement and of the possibility of the capitalist system breaking in its weakest links.

Monopoly capitalism extremely aggravated the antagonisms between the capitalist countries, particularly between the more powerful ones; it was this that led to the imperialist World War.

The intensification of these antagonisms makes it possible for the working class of individual countries to retain power after its seizure and to organise "socialist production." This was subsequently borne out by the case of the Soviet government in Russia. That is why Lenin took up arms so vigorously against the traditional view, now become a dangerous prejudice, that the revolution could not be successful in one country alone, but would have to occur in several countries simultaneously. For this view excused and justified the social patriots of every country in restraining their proletariat from resorting to revolution until such time as the proletariats of other countries had done so, and everywhere encouraged a psychology of revolutionary inactivity.

On this subject Stalin has written:

"Lenin was the first of the Marxists to submit imperialism as the latest and last phase of capitalism to a real Marxian analysis, he was the first to raise in a new way the question of the possibility of socialism succeeding in individual capitalist countries and to answer that question affirmatively. I am referring to Lenin's pamphlet *Imperialism*. I am referring to Lenin's article *The United States of Europe Slogan*, published in 1915. I am referring to the controversy between Trotsky and Lenin on the slogan of the United States of Europe, or of the whole world, when Lenin first advanced the thesis regarding the possibility of socialism triumphing in one country."\*

"How did the Marxists answer that question formerly, in the 'forties

\* Stalin, *On the Opposition*

say, or in 1850-60, and generally in the period when monopoly capitalism did not yet exist, when the law of the uneven development of capitalism had not yet been discovered and could not have been discovered, and when, in consequence, the question of the triumph of socialism in single countries was not regarded in the way it came later to be regarded? All we Marxists, beginning with Marx and Engels, then held the opinion that socialism could not triumph in one single country, and that for socialism to be successful it was essential that the revolution should take place simultaneously in several countries, at least in several of the most developed of the civilised countries”<sup>\*</sup>

“In the old days, in the period of pre-monopoly capitalism—the pre-imperialist period, when the globe had not yet been partitioned among the financial groups, when the forcible re-division of what had already been divided had not yet become a question of life and death for capitalism, when the unevenness of economic development had not yet become, and could not yet have become, as acute as it became later, and when the contradictions of capitalism had not been brought to that stage of development where they transform flourishing capitalism into moribund capitalism and open up the possibility of socialism triumphing in individual countries—at that time Engels’ formula was undoubtedly correct. In the new period, the period of the development of imperialism, when the unevenness of the development of capitalist countries has become the determining force of imperialist development, when the inevitable conflicts and wars between the imperialists are weakening the imperialist front and make it possible to force a breach in that front in individual countries, and when the law of uneven development discovered by Lenin has become the starting point of the theory of the triumph of socialism in individual countries—in these circumstances, the old formula of Engels becomes inaccurate and must inevitably be replaced by another formula which postulates the possibility of socialism triumphing in one single country.”<sup>\*</sup>

In his concluding speech on his report to the Fifteenth Party Conference (from which these quotations are taken), Stalin pointed out that towards the conclusion of their lives, Marx and Engels somewhat moderated Engels’ old formula and admitted that it was possible that “the proletarian revolution might begin even in individual countries.”

### *Consolidation of the Lefts Around the Bolsheviks*

The consolidation of the revolutionary Left elements, subsequently to form the nucleus of the Communist International, proceeded very slowly within the Social-Democratic parties. To-

<sup>\*</sup> *Ibid.*

gether with the Left elements, there frequently split off Centrist and pacifist elements, who, while they were at one with the Russian Bolsheviks in recognising the imperialist character of the war and that the war policy of the official parties was inimical to the interests of the proletariat, nevertheless, did not realise that the only escape from physical extermination for the working class was to transform the imperialist war into a civil war and to work for the defeat of their own imperialist governments. None the less, inasmuch as these elements declared themselves opposed to the prevailing policy of the Second International and to the voting of war credits, and realised the necessity of combating the imperialist war, it was considered possible to work together with them up to a certain point and within certain limits. Regarding these elements Lenin wrote as follows:

"Those elements, namely Socialists of a *pacifist* shade, exist both in the neutral and in some belligerent countries. . . . These elements can be our fellow travellers. It is necessary to get closer to them with the aim of fighting the social-chauvinists. But we must remember that they are *only* fellow travellers, that as far as the main and fundamental problems are concerned, when the International is reconstructed, those same elements will go, not with us, but against us, with Kautsky, Scheidemann, Vandervelde, Sembat. At international conferences we must not confine our programme to what is acceptable to those elements if we do not wish to become prisoners of the vacillating pacifists . . . In our conviction, it is the chief task of the Social-Democratic opposition at the present moment to raise the banner of revolutionary Marxism, to tell the workers firmly and definitely how we look upon imperialist wars, to put forth the slogan of mass revolutionary action, *i.e.*, to turn the period of imperialist war into the beginning of a period of civil wars . . . The only real programme of action, then, would be the Marxian programme which brings to the masses a complete and clear understanding of what has happened, which explains what imperialism is and how to fight against it, which declares openly that opportunism has brought about the collapse of the Second International; which appeals to the workers to build up a Marxian International openly without and *against* the opportunists"\*

But even the best of the Lefts were guilty of gross opportunist errors on a number of questions, made obvious concessions to bourgeois pacifism, and in place of the slogan of transforming the imperialist war into civil war, called for peace and disarmament. Apart from their indecision and their fear of break-

\* Lenin, "The Reconstruction of the International," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII.

ing with the official parties, which had betrayed socialism, the Left elements displayed utter helplessness in carrying on illegal work against the war.

"A great defect of revolutionary Marxism in Germany," Lenin wrote, "is the absence of a solid illegal organisation, which could systematically pursue its line and educate the masses in the spirit of the new tasks. Such an organisation would have adopted a definite attitude both towards opportunism and towards Kautskyism."\*

The vacillations of the Lefts increased, particularly when the Kautskyist Centrists, realising the growing revolutionary spirit of the masses, began to manoeuvre and pose as an opposition to the Scheidemann majority within the German Social-Democratic Party.

"The *Fronde*," Lenin wrote, "that of late Kautsky and Haase are allowing themselves against the 'higher bodies' should deceive no one. The differences between them and the Scheidemanns are not those of principle. One group assumes that Hindenburg and Mackensen have already won the war. . . . The other group thinks that Hindenburg and Mackensen have not yet won the war and that it is necessary to 'see it through'.

"Kautskyism is conducting a sham fight against the 'higher bodies'—in order to be able, when the war is over, to hide from the workers the clash of principles, to plaster up the issue by a thousand and one swollen resolutions in a hazy 'Left' spirit (and the diplomats of the Second International are past masters in this kind of work).

"It goes without saying that in its difficult struggle against the 'higher bodies' the German opposition must take advantage even of this unprincipled weak-kneed opposition of Kautskyism. A hostile attitude towards neo-Kautskyism, however, must remain the touchstone for every internationalist. Only he is a real internationalist who fights against Kautskyism, who understands that even *after* the pretended change of heart by its leaders, the Centre remains in principle an ally of the chauvinists and opportunists."\*\*

In this respect Lenin's criticism of Junius' (Rosa Luxemburg's) pamphlet *The Crisis of Social-Democracy* is of interest. In this pamphlet, by the way, the official German Social-Democratic Party was referred to as a "stinking corpse":

"To the Russian reader who is acquainted with the Social-Democratic literature published in Russian abroad in the years 1914-16," Lenin writes, "the pamphlet of Junius presents nothing new in the way of principle

\* Lenin, "On Junius' Pamphlet," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.

\*\* Lenin, "The Reconstruction of the International," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII

Reading this pamphlet, and comparing what was, for instance, set forth in the manifesto of the Central Committee of our Party (September-November 1914), in the Berne resolutions (March 1915) and in the numerous commentaries thereto, with the arguments of the German revolutionary Marxists, one becomes convinced of the decided incompleteness of the arguments of Junius and of two errors he has committed." \*

"Junius," Lenin goes on to say, "has not emancipated himself completely even from the influence of the German Left Social-Democrats, who are afraid of a split and who fear to issue consistent revolutionary slogans . . . But this defect is not a defect of Junius personally, but rather a consequence of the weakness of *all* the German Lefts, who are enveloped on all hands by an abominable mesh of Kautskyian hypocrisy, pedantry and complaisance towards the opportunists." \*\*

While ruthlessly exposing semi-Centrist tendencies and all forms of compromise with social chauvinism and Kautskyism, Lenin at the same time vigorously combated the "Left" deviationist tendencies, represented chiefly by Bukharin, supported by Pyatakov and others. Bukharin presented his own theses to the Berne Conference, theses which Lenin characterised as semi-anarchist.

Bukharin went so far as to reject all forms of the state, even the state of a proletarian dictatorship. Bukharin regarded the imperialist stage of development of capitalism not only in Western Europe, but also in Russia, as a pure form of imperialism, pedantically ignoring the existence of pre-imperialist forms of capitalism, not to speak of pre-capitalist economic forms. Hence the denial of the minimum programme, the advocacy of the slogan of a direct socialist revolution in Russia, and complete disregard for the peasantry, which approximated the position of Bukharin to that of Trotsky. Like Hilferding and the other Social-Democratic theoreticians of imperialism, Bukharin regarded the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie of the towns as part of "a solid reactionary mass." While Lenin vigorously opposed the call to defend the fatherland in the imperialist war, Bukharin was opposed to the defence of the fatherland under all circumstances, even in the case of a national war, including, presumably, a war waged by a proletarian state against the surrounding bourgeois countries. This followed, on the one hand, from Bukharin's anarchist denial of the state, and, on the other, from his disregard of the importance of

\* Lenin, "On Junius' Pamphlet," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.

\*\* *Ibid.*

the national and colonial question and of national wars in the era of imperialism.

In this respect, Bukharin and Pyatakov shared the views of Rosa Luxemburg which Lenin, even prior to the outbreak of the war, had so vigorously controverted, and particularly the denial by Rosa Luxemburg and those who shared her views, of the point in the programme which advocated the right of all nations to self-determination.

It is a characteristic fact that the "Left" semi-anarchist tendencies of Bukharin were coupled with a conciliatory attitude towards Centrism and its pacifist slogans, and in particular to the Trotskyist variety of Centrism. He also rejected defeatism.\*

What drew Bukharin close to Trotsky was the absurd "Leftist" theory of permanent revolution—a theory which Bukharin, as we have already stated, had adopted—as well as his position on the national question.

For all their general "Leftist" tendency, Bukharin's views at the time of the imperialist war consisted of a fairly motley mixture of "Left" and Right deviations from Leninism. They contained the seed of all his later errors. Bukharin's overestimation of the monopolist tendencies of capitalism, in particular, was later to bear fruit in his theory of "organised capitalism."

### *The Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences*

In September 1915, a conference of socialists opposed to the war was held in Zimmerwald, in which the Russian Party participated. The manifesto issued by the Conference recorded the fact that the socialists of nearly all the belligerent states had accepted the point of view of their governments, and were pursuing tactics which were disastrous to the working class. From the point of view of the working class, the manifesto declared, the war meant the mutual extermination of proletariat by proletariat. The working class must combat the war. The socialist workers in the various countries who are opposed to the war must unite.

\* The resolution of the group headed by Bukharin directly declared:

"The group, however, also rejects as a slogan for Russia what is known as the defeat of Russia, particularly in the form in which it is expressed in No 38 of the central organ.

"The absolute impossibility of carrying on practical agitation in this spirit makes it necessary to reject such agitation in favour of defeat."

Such were the rather hazy contents of the manifesto of the Zimmerwald Conference, the author of which was the Centrist Trotsky. It contained not a single word regarding the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war, or regarding defeatism. It gave no clear formulation of the slogan of a struggle for power and for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Nevertheless, the conference laid the foundations of an international union opposed to the war. What was now required was to straighten out its political line and to secure the supremacy of the views of the Russian Party over the views of the Centrists and semi-Centrists. After making a number of declarations on principle and a series of reservations, the Russian Party subscribed to the Zimmerwald manifesto when its own draft for a manifesto, written by Lenin, had been rejected \*

A few months later, in April 1916, a commission elected by the Zimmerwald Conference summoned a new conference, known as the Second Zimmerwald, or Kienthal Conference. Almost the same groups represented at the Zimmerwald Conference were represented at the Kienthal Conference, but the manifesto issued by the latter went much farther than the manifesto of the Zimmerwald Conference. The Kienthal Conference declared that, under the conditions of the capitalist system, the demand for disarmament was a utopian demand and called for a direct fight on behalf of socialism. It failed, however, to explain how that fight was to be conducted.

Lenin succeeded in creating a more or less solid group at the Zimmerwald Conference, known as the Zimmerwald Left, consisting of delegates who were prepared to fight the war by revolutionary methods and inclined to break away from the Second International (the Bolsheviks had been advocating a split from the very first days of the war) and to create a Third International. This

\* At the Zimmerwald Conference the Left wing of the German Social-Democratic Party was represented by Ledebour and A. Hoffmann (both in reality Left Centrists), Mayer, Thalheimer and Borkhardt, the Left French syndicalist group by Merrheim and Bourderon; the Italian Party as a whole was represented by Modigliani and P. Lazzari and the Swiss Party as a whole by Robert Grimm and Charles Napp. The Russian parties were represented by the Bolshevik C.C., the Menshevik Organisational Committee, which formed part of the Right wing of the Zimmerwald Conference, and the Left S.R.'s. The Rumanian Party was represented by Rakovsky, who at that time associated himself with the position of Martov. Trotsky was present at the Conference, and together with Martov supported the position of the Right wing of the Zimmerwald Conference.

group consisted of the Polish Social-Democrats, the German Spartacists and small groups in Sweden, Norway, Holland, France and other countries.

Concerning the Zimmerwald Conference Lenin wrote:

"After a whole year of war, the *only* trend in the International which adopted a perfectly definite resolution and also a draft manifesto based on it, and that united the consistent Marxists of Russia, Poland, the Lettish Province, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and Holland, proved to be the trend that was represented by our party" \*

### *Defencists and Centrists in Russia*

What was the attitude adopted towards the war by the various Social-Democratic groups in Russia opposed to the Bolsheviks?

Among the Menshevik liquidators, the majority of the writers, headed by Potresov, as well as the organisers and active workers in the legal societies followed in the footsteps of Plekhanov and adopted a social-chauvinist position, although in more cautious terms. True, they complained that the situation of the Russian Social-Democrats was far more difficult than that of the French and German Social-Democrats. The French Social-Democrats might well support their government; they were allowed to occupy government posts and were generally patted on the back. If only the Russian government were to treat the liquidators in a like manner, it would be possible to support it likewise with a quiet conscience. Unfortunately, the Russian government would not follow the praiseworthy example of the French government; it declined to invite the liquidators to assume ministerial posts. The liquidators wrote Vandervelde a letter on this subject, requesting whether, in his capacity of cabinet minister and as the Chairman of the International Socialist Bureau, he could not influence the Russian government to alter its policy towards the liquidators. If the Russian government were to hearken to Vandervelde, the liquidators would be glad to lend it active support. Meanwhile, they advocated the slogan of not resisting the war. This, of course, was social-chauvinism of a most despicable kind.

The Mensheviks abroad, the members of the Organisational Committee, in general adhered to the views of the Zimmerwald

\* Lenin, "Revolutionary Marxists at the International Socialist Conference," *Selected Works*, Vol. V.



Right. Martov at first wrote fairly revolutionary articles against the war. His revolutionary spirit, however, was shortlived. Martov declined to break with the Russian defencists. Axelrod was particularly outspoken in his condonation of the latter, declaring that it was necessary to maintain unity between the "internationalists" and the social-chauvinists within the ranks of the Menshevik Party.

Martov's "internationalism" during the war served as a fig leaf to cover the naked social-chauvinism of the vast majority of the Mensheviks.

At first Trotsky's group maintained a position hardly distinguishable from that of Martov's. At the beginning of the war a paper was founded in Paris, called *Nashe Slovo*, supported by a number of Mensheviks headed by Martov, several *Vperyod*-ists, Trotsky and a few Bolshevik conciliators.\*

*Nashe Slovo* at first did not advocate a split with the Second International, in distinction from Lenin, who from the very outbreak of the war declared that the Second International had perished and that it was essential to create a Third International based on a complete break with social-chauvinism. *Nashe Slovo* considered it possible to bring the greater part of the members of the European Social-Democratic parties (by which it had in mind primarily the Centrist, Kautskyian elements, to which it itself belonged), back to an international point of view. It advocated the slogan of the United States of Europe, at a time when Lenin had declared that slogan to be fallacious and one that offered a loophole for opportunism. It was only gradually that *Nashe Slovo* evolved towards the Left, which caused the retirement of Martov and his supporters. But the paper continued to be decidedly opposed to Lenin's slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war and to defeatism. It pretended that defeatism was defencism turned inside-out: to strive for the defeat of the Russian government meant, forsooth, supporting the German government.

Thus, on the question of defeatism *Nashe Slovo* virtually used the same arguments against Lenin as were used by the social-chauvinists. Trotsky continued to maintain his Menshevik attitude

\* Trotsky was the moving spirit on the paper. Among its contributors were several Mensheviks led by Martov (Baer, Rakovsky, Semkovsky, Pavlovich-Weltman, and others), a number of Bolshevik conciliationists (Sokolnikov and Lozovsky) and some former *Vperyod*-ists (Lunacharsky, Pokrovsky).

towards the peasantry. He argued that the impending revolution in Russia would be a working class revolution and that the peasants would play an even smaller part in that revolution than in the Revolution of 1905. To this Lenin in his article "*Two Lines of the Revolution*" replied as follows

"Trotsky's original theory takes from the Bolsheviks their call for a decisive proletarian revolutionary struggle and for the conquest of political power by the proletariat, and from the Mensheviks it takes the 'repudiation' of the role of the peasantry. The peasantry, it says, has become divided into strata, differentiated, its potential revolutionary role has dwindled more and more, in Russia a 'national' revolution is impossible, 'we are living in the era of imperialism,' says Trotsky, and 'imperialism does not oppose the bourgeois nation to the old regime but the proletariat to the bourgeois nation'."

Lenin characterises this sort of argument as "an amusing example of juggling with the word imperialism"

"The differentiation among the peasantry increased the class struggle within it, it aroused very many hitherto politically dormant elements, it drew the agricultural proletariat nearer to the urban proletariat (the Bolsheviks have insisted ever since 1905 that the former should be *separately* organised, and they included this demand in the resolution of the Stockholm, Menshevik, Congress). But the antagonism between the peasantry on the one hand and the Markovs, Romanovs, Khvostovs, on the other, has become stronger, has grown, has become more acute. This is such an obvious truth that not even the thousands of phrases in scores of Trotsky's Paris articles will 'refute' it. Trotsky is in fact helping the liberal labour politicians in Russia who interpret the 'repudiation' of the role of the peasantry to mean *refusal* to rouse the peasants to revolution!"

Subsequent events have proven who was right in the appraisal of the role of the peasantry in the impending revolution—Lenin or Trotsky. On the national question Trotsky, like Martov, was opposed to the Bolsheviks' demand for the right of self-determination including secession, thereby playing into the hands of tsarist imperialism, of which Lenin publicly accused him. The Centrist character of Trotsky's views during the war is borne out by the systematic support he gave to Chkheidze's Menshevik fraction in the Duma. Finally, Trotsky vigorously opposed Lenin's views regarding the possibility of socialism triumphing in one country, he supported the view widely shared in the Second Inter-

\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol V

\*\* *Ibid*

national that the socialist revolution was only conceivable as taking place simultaneously in the chief capitalist countries, that otherwise it was bound to be crushed.

### *Party Work in Russia*

The conduct of Party work within Russia had become extremely difficult for the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. Shortly after the outbreak of the war an attempt was made by the Social-Democratic workers' fraction in the Duma, and by Kamenev, the representative of the Central Committee, to summon a conference of Party workers in Russia. The attempt ended in the arrest of the members of the Conference, including all the Duma deputies. After several months of confinement they were tried and the majority of them exiled. At the trial, Kamenev, a member of the Central Committee, shamefully denied the internationalist standpoint and endeavoured to represent himself as a defencist, for which he was most severely rebuked by Lenin.

Practically every legally existing organisation, as well as the legally published press, was destroyed at the very outbreak of the war. A large number of active Party workers met their death at the front; many were condemned to exile and to imprisonment. Contact with the organisation abroad was maintained with the utmost difficulty. Rare numbers of the central organ of the Party *The Social-Democrat* and its journal *The Communist* were issued from time to time in Geneva.

In spite of these nightmare conditions, however, Party work was carried on without interruption. It rapidly gained in scope. The severe military defeats suffered by Russia in the spring and autumn of 1915, leading to the evacuation of Galicia, Poland, Lithuania and Courland, intensified the dissatisfaction of the masses with the tsarist government. What Lenin had foretold at the very outbreak of the war was now fulfilled: the defeats suffered by the tsarist government exposed the whole wretchedness of the Russian military system, the weakness of the government and its incapacity to cope with the tasks of the war. The result was to furnish a powerful stimulus to the revolutionary movement. Even the bourgeoisie, which at first indulged in patriotic raptures and abandoned its opposition to the government in the hope that the war would be successful and open up vast

foreign markets, now began to be convinced that the government was incapable of conducting a successful war and consequently revived its opposition to the government. The severe military defeats and the tremendous losses suffered by the armies had by the summer of 1915 shaken the government and rendered it disposed to make concessions to the bourgeoisie.

### *Elections to the War Industries Committees*

One of these concessions was the establishment of what was known as War Industries Committees, public organisations for the control of the distribution and fulfilment of orders for military supplies. The bourgeoisie wanted to have the working class participate in this highly patriotic cause. They hoped the War Industries Committees would provide a new instrument for influencing the working class. The government gave its consent and the workers in several cities were invited to institute elections. The Menshevik defencists, who from "non-hindrance" to the war had soon passed to open support of the war, immediately expressed their readiness to participate in the War Industries Committees and began patriotic agitation on their behalf among the workers.

The Bolshevik Party, on the other hand, opposed participation in the War Industries Committees, regarding them as a means of mobilising the working class in support of the imperialist war. In Petrograd the elections took place in the autumn of 1915. Influenced by the agitation of the Party, the majority of the workers' delegates at first refused to elect representatives to the War Industries Committees, but after new elections were held, and after considerable manoeuvring, accompanied by the application of terrorist methods and the arrest of Party workers, and with the aid of the bourgeois press and the police, the liquidators succeeded in inducing a number of the factory and workshop delegates to go through with the elections. Thus was formed the "labour group" of the Central War Industries Committee, headed by a subsequent wrecker, Gvosdev, and by the provocateur Abrosimov. This group attempted to acquire a monopoly in the representation of the interests of the working class of the country. Similar groups were formed in other cities. Through them the liquidators attempted to carry on their activities among the working class masses with the full support of the bourgeoisie and the govern-

ment These groups, however, were isolated from the mass of the workers, who, in response to the appeal of the Bolshevik Party organisations, boycotted the elections to the War Industries Committees.

### *A New Upsurge*

The war profoundly affected the economic life of Russia. A vast number of peasant households, deprived of labour power and livestock, became impoverished and pauperised. The kulaks, on the other hand, grew richer and more powerful. Class antagonisms in the countryside became aggravated. A number of branches of industry producing articles of general consumption restricted their activities. On the other hand, the industries producing war supplies expanded, particularly the metal industry. Monetary inflation brought about a rise in the cost of living. The monopolist tendency became increasingly marked in every branch of capitalist industry. From the summer of 1915 we note a distinct revival of the mass strike movement. Economic strikes were largely provoked by the severe deterioration of the material conditions of the working class. In the first year and a half of the war, prices of articles of general consumption in Moscow rose by 50 per cent, while wages increased only by 19 per cent. In 1915 economic strikes still dominated over political strikes, particularly as compared with 1914, although it should be said that during the war it was particularly hard to draw an unconditional distinction between political and economic strikes. In 1914 there were 1,327,000 strikers, of which 985,000, or 73 per cent, were participants in political strikes; in 1915, there were 538,000 strikers, of which 155,000, or 23 per cent, were participants in political strikes. In the summer of 1915 strikers were fired on in Kostroma and Ivanovo-Voznesensk. In 1916 the number of strikers had risen to 1,300,000 (about as many as in 1914), of which 726,000, or 56 per cent, were participants in political strikes. A large number of the strikes took place in Petrograd. The causes were various: the anniversary of the revolutionary events of January 9, May Day celebrations, protest against the arrest and trial of the Bolshevik fraction of the Duma, etc. The attempts of the liquidators and the so-called labour group of the War Industries Committees

to restrain the workers from striking were fruitless. In spite of the gag, the voice of the Bolshevik Party began to make itself heard. The Party organisations gained in size and strength and the agitational work of the Party became widespread, in spite of the ruthless measures adopted by the government towards the Party, the arrest and imprisonment of its members and so forth.

The position of the government was aggravated by the increasing discontent of the bourgeoisie, which was steadily growing convinced of the incapacity of the government to protect the interests of the Russian bourgeoisie in the war. In spite of every effort of the government, the revolutionary struggle of the masses continued to develop with unrestrained force, until at last tsarism was engulfed by the powerful revolutionary outburst of February 1917.

### *The Party on the Eve of the February Revolution*

The war was a great historical test for the Bolshevik Party. As Lenin justly remarked:

"The great European war of 1914-15 gave the European as well as Russian Social-Democrats a chance to test the correctness of their tactics on a world-wide crisis."<sup>1</sup>

The European Social-Democrats, who had always been the ideal of the Mensheviks, failed to stand the test. Opportunism, which had become the dominant current in the European Social-Democratic parties prior to the war, had now developed into social-chauvinism, into an open and direct national-liberal labour policy, the nature of which Lenin defined in the following terms:

"It is an alliance of a section of the radical petty bourgeoisie and a negligible number of privileged workers with 'their' national bourgeoisie against the masses of the proletariat."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the revolutionary Marxists, who understood the essential nature of the crisis of capitalism in its last imperialist stage, who remained faithful to the fundamental teachings of Marx and who were armed by the vast experience gained in the Russian revolution, rallied around the Zimmerwald Left. The Bol-

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, "Socialism and War," *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

shevik Party was the heart and soul of the Zimmerwald Left and maintained within it a consistent revolutionary position.

In contradistinction to the ideology of opportunism and social-chauvinism—the defence of the bourgeois fatherland and the advocacy of civil peace—the Zimmerwald Left advocated the ideology of true proletarian internationalism: uncompromising class struggle and the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war with the object of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat and creating a socialist society.

Within Russia the Bolsheviks had the opportunity of testing their tactics in connection with the world crisis, which proved to be even more burdensome and painful for backward Russia than for the more developed capitalist countries.

“The reactionary, predatory, slave-driving character of the present war,” Lenin writes, “is infinitely more obvious in relation to tsarism than in relation to other governments. Still, the main group of liquidators (the only one which, aside from ours, has a considerable influence in Russia, thanks to its liberal connections) turned towards social-chauvinism! Having had for a considerable length of time the monopoly of legality, this group, *Nasha Zarya*, conducted propaganda among the masses in favour of ‘not resisting the war,’ in favour of a victory for the Triple (at present Quadruple) Entente, and accused German imperialism of ‘extraordinary sins,’ etc. Plekhanov, who since 1903 has repeatedly shown examples of his utter lack of political character, and who often went over to the opportunists, took this position even more decisively. For this action he is acclaimed by the whole bourgeois press of Russia. . . . Thus it was sufficiently proven that we were right in our understanding of liquidationism and in excluding the main group of liquidators from our Party.”\*

During the imperialist war the government and the bourgeoisie did everything in their power to destroy the Bolshevik Party organisationally and disintegrate it ideologically. The Bolshevik defeatists were branded as traitors, apostates and agents of German imperialism. Moral terrorism on the part of “society” was accompanied by ruthless suppression by the police and the courts. It required tremendous ideological firmness, endurance and discipline, and powerful traditions of organisation to enable the Party to withstand the violent blows showered upon it. Only a small section of the Party was affected by opportunist vacillations, and only in isolated instances did they assume the form of outright renegacy.

\* *Ibid.*

Military defeats, repeated mobilisations, famine, high prices, the disruption of the transport system and the dearth of all articles of necessity, provided abundant food for the dissatisfaction of the masses with the government, the bourgeoisie and the social-chauvinist liquidators who supported the war. These circumstances permitted the Party to get a firm hold of the working class masses, in spite of all measures of repression. Towards the Party turned the rising working class generation, still inexperienced and unschooled, but burning with a revolutionary hatred of their class oppressors. Towards the Party turned the adult workers who had experienced the defeat of 1905 and the reaction, and who thirsted for vengeance against the government and the bourgeoisie.

What tasks did the Party set itself in face of the approaching revolution? Lenin clearly described them in October 1915, when a revolutionary situation began to develop in the country as a result of the disastrous defeats suffered by the government on the war fronts:

"The social content of the impending revolution in Russia can only be that of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry \* . . . The task of the proletariat of Russia is to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia *in order* to kindle the socialist revolution in Europe. . . . As hitherto, we consider that it is permissible for the Social-Democrats to enter a Revolutionary Provisional Government together with the democratic petty bourgeoisie, but *not* with the revolutionary chauvinists. The foundation of revolutionary chauvinism is the class position of the petty bourgeoisie. . . . At present it is vacillating between chauvinism (which prevents it from being consistently revolutionary, even in the sense of democratic revolution) and proletarian internationalism. The political spokesmen of this petty bourgeoisie in Russia at the present moment are the Trudoviki, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the *Nasha Zarya*, Chkheidze's fraction, the Organisation Committee, Mr. Plekhanov and the like. If the revolutionary chauvinists were victorious in Russia, we would be opposed to defending *their* 'fatherland' in the present war. To the question as to whether it is possible for the proletariat to assume the leading role in the bourgeois Russian revolution, we answer in the affirmative: yes, it is possible if the petty bourgeoisie will swing to the Left at the decisive moment;

\* On this question Lenin sharply differed from those Bolsheviks (Bukharin) who tended towards the Trotskyist position of denying the role of the peasantry, who advocated abolishing the minimum programme, and who tended towards anarchist views on the question of the state. Lenin in the most decided manner rebutted the semi-anarchist maximalist views held by Bukharin at that time, just as he rebutted the Luxemburgist views of Bukharin, Radek and Pyatakov on the national question.



and it is being pushed to the Left, not only by our propaganda, but by a number of objective factors. . . . To the question as to what the party of the proletariat would do if the revolution placed power in its hands in the present war, our answer is as follows we would propose peace to *all* the belligerents on the basis of the liberation of the colonies and of *all* the dependent, oppressed and disfranchised peoples . . . There is no doubt that a victory of the proletariat in Russia would create unusually favourable conditions for the development of the revolution both in Asia and Europe. *Even 1905 proved that*"<sup>2</sup>

This is the way in which Lenin defined the tasks of the Party almost a year and a half before the February Revolution, pursuing the line of carrying the bourgeois democratic revolution to its completion and of the transformation of that revolution into the socialist revolution.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, "A Few Theses," *Selected Works*, Vol. V.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STRUGGLE FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT— THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

*Fall of the tsarist government—The bourgeoisie and the compromisers—The Party at the moment of revolution—The position of Lenin—Lenin's return to Russia—the April Theses—The Party and the agrarian question—The Kamenev opposition to Lenin's theses—The Seventh (April 1917) Conference—Agrarian and national questions—Revision of the Party programme—Triumph over opportunism*

#### *Fall of the Tsarist Government*

The February Revolution was a revolt of the masses of the people headed by the proletariat; it was a revolt of the workers and soldiers against the tsarist government and against the imperialist war.

"Without the tremendous class conflicts and the revolutionary energy displayed by the Russian proletariat during the three years 1905-07, this second revolution could not possibly have been so rapid in the sense that its first phase was completed in a few days. The first revolution (1905) deeply ploughed the soil and uprooted age-old prejudices, it awakened millions of workers and tens of millions of peasants to political life and to the political struggle, it revealed *all* classes (and all the principal parties) of Russian society to each other and to the world in their true character, it revealed the true alignment of their interests, their strength and modes of action, their immediate and their ultimate aims. This first revolution, and the succeeding period of counter-revolution (1907-14), laid bare the very soul of the tsarist monarchy, brought it to the 'last pitch,' exposed the corruption and infamy, the cynicism and dissoluteness of the tsarist gang led by that monster, Rasputin, it exposed the bestiality of the Romanov family, pogromists, who had drenched Russia in the blood of Jews, workers and revolutionaries—those 'first among peers,' *landlords who owned millions of acres of land and who were ready to stoop to any brutality, to any crime—who were ready to ruin and destroy any number of citizens in order to preserve the 'sacred rights of property' for themselves and their class*"

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, "Letters from Afar," *Selected Works*, Vol VI

The tsarist monarchy fell under the blows of the insurgent workers of the capital reinforced by the army. The collapse was preceded during the second half of February by strikes and street demonstrations, leading to clashes with the police and the troops. In these manifestations the working women were particularly active. The movement finally assumed the form of a general revolt of the proletariat of Petrograd, who were joined by the reserve regiments of the guards.

It was when these *peasants* clad in soldiers' uniform came to the aid of the Petrograd workers, when in the streets of the capital that revolutionary alliance of the working class and the peasantry was effected on which Lenin had based his strategy and tactics during the first revolution, and when this alliance found a response throughout the whole country, that the revolution triumphed. As in the case of all European revolutions, the fall of the government was taken advantage of by the bourgeoisie, represented by the Cadets and the Octobrists, who until then had been imploring the masses to refrain from open action against the tsarist government, in order to take the power of government into their own hands. Thus the Provisional Government was formed, of which Lenin in his *First Stage of the First Revolution* writes:

"This government is not a fortuitous assemblage of persons.

"They are the representatives of the new class that has risen to political power in Russia, the class of the capitalist landlords and the bourgeoisie, the class that for a long time *has been ruling* our country economically, and that during the revolution of 1905-07, and during the counter-revolutionary period of 1907-14, and, with a particular rapidity during the period of the war of 1914-17, organised itself politically with extreme rapidity, taking into its hands the control of popular education, conventions of every type, the Duma, the War Industries Committees, etc. This new class was already 'nearly' in power in 1917, and therefore the first blows dealt at tsarism were sufficient to bring it to the ground and clear the way for the bourgeoisie." \*

The bourgeoisie was not the motive force of the February Revolution. The bourgeoisie joined the revolution only when the troops had gone over to the side of the workers thereby deciding the fate of tsarism. It requires the effrontery of a Shlyapnikov to assert that the bourgeoisie was the leader of the February

\* *Ibid.*

Revolution The bourgeoisie did everything in its power to prevent the revolution. One has only to recall the notorious letter written by Milyukov on the very eve of the revolution, in which he had the audacity to assert that the action of the workers was being instigated by German agents. The bourgeoisie did everything in its power to come to an understanding with the tsar in order to prevent the revolution and replace it by a court revolution. When, despite its efforts, the revolution did break out, the bourgeoisie attempted to prevent it achieving its goal and to preserve the monarchy and the old dynasty; for the prime aim of the bourgeoisie was to continue the war, whereas the insurrectionary masses, headed by the working class, wanted to end the war.

"The revolutionary proletariat, therefore, cannot but view the revolution of March 14 as its first, though far from complete, victory along its glorious course; it cannot but assume the task of continuing the struggle to achieve a democratic republic and socialism":

"The workers and soldiers of Petrograd, like the workers and soldiers of the whole of Russia, self-sacrificingly fought the tsarist monarchy—on behalf of freedom, of land for the peasants, of peace as against the imperialist slaughter. Anglo-French imperialist capital, in order to continue and intensify that slaughter, hatched court intrigues, conspired, incited and encouraged the Guchkovs and Milyukovs, and prepared to instal a ready-made government, which indeed seized power after the proletarian struggle had struck the first blows at tsarism." \*\*

"The honour and the good fortune of being the first to start the revolution, i.e., the great, the only legitimate and just war, the war of the oppressed against the oppressors, has fallen to the lot of the Russian workers.

"The Petrograd workers have vanquished the tsarist monarchy. In their heroic struggle against the police and the tsar's armies, the workers, having started the uprising unarmed in face of machine-guns, have won over to their side the majority of the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison. The same thing occurred in Moscow and in other cities. Abandoned by his armies, the tsar had to capitulate . . ." : + +

How are we to explain the fact that the bourgeoisie was able to take advantage of the victory of the workers over tsarism in order to form the bourgeois imperialist Provisional Government?

"Owing to the great rapidity of the overturn, owing to the direct help of Anglo-French capitalists, owing to insufficient class-consciousness

\* Lenin, "Draft of Theses of March 17, 1917," *Collected Works*, Vol XX, Book I

\*\* Lenin, "Letters from Afar, I"

\*\*\* Lenin, "The Revolution in Russia and the Tasks of the Workers of all Countries," *Collected Works*, Vol XX, Book I.

among the workers and the masses of the people in Petrograd, owing to the organisation and preparedness of the Russian landlords and capitalists, the latter have succeeded in seizing the state power” --

### *The Bourgeoisie and the Compromisers*

But the bourgeoisie could never have arrived at power without the aid of their “socialist” allies, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. Their historical function was to make the bourgeois government acceptable to the insurgent masses. Hitherto these “socialists” had with no less emphasis than their bourgeois patrons declared themselves opposed to revolutionary mass action and had exerted every effort to prevent the workers from rising in revolt. The most they were prepared to do was to appeal to the workers to support the Duma in its demand for a responsible ministry. But when the insurrection proved victorious, the Mensheviks and the S.R.’s were the first to come forward as the leaders of the insurgent masses. The petty bourgeoisie organised itself as rapidly as the bourgeoisie. It seized control of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies, which had been organised after the model of 1905, and in its name surrendered power to the imperialist bourgeoisie. If, after receiving power from the hands of the S.R.’s and Mensheviks, the bourgeoisie was obliged to make considerable concessions, it was not because the leaders of the Menshevik and S.R. Executive Committee brought any particular pressure to bear on it, but because the real masters in the capital were the insurgent workers and soldiers and because the provinces were everywhere following the example of the capital and organising Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies.

The bourgeoisie was willy-nilly obliged to abandon the attempt to preserve the monarchy, for it did not possess sufficient power in the country. Nor did it possess sufficient power to deprive the people of the rights and the freedom they had won for themselves.

The big bourgeoisie, which formed the main support of the government, fully justified the counter-revolutionary reputation attributed to it by the Bolsheviks. But the power of the bour-

\* *Ibid.*

geoisie was not *undivided*. A sort of unstable *dual* government had been established in the country. the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (the Soviets) and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (the Provisional Government).

The nature of this dual power was described by Lenin as follows.

"In what does this dual power consist? In the fact that side by side with the Provisional Government, the government of the bourgeoisie, there has developed another government, an as yet weak and embryonic, but undoubtedly real and growing government--the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

"What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and the peasantry (clad in army uniform) What is the political nature of this government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship *i.e.*, a power based on outright revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the masses from below, and not on laws made by a centralised government . . .

"This power is of exactly the same type as the Paris Commune of 1871 . . .

"They refuse to recognise the obvious truth that to the extent that the Soviets exist, *to the extent that* they are a power, to that extent we have in Russia a state of the type of the Paris Commune

"I have underscored the words '*to the extent that*,' for the Soviet power is only in its inception. By direct agreement with the bourgeois Provisional Government and by a series of actual concessions, the Soviet Power *has surrendered and is surrendering* its position to the bourgeoisie.

"Why? Is it because Chkheidze, Tsereteli, Steklov and Co. are making a 'mistake'? Nonsense Only a philistine can think so, not a Marxist. The reason is the *lack of class consciousness* and organisation among the workers and peasants. The 'mistake' of the above-mentioned leaders is simply due to their petty-bourgeois position, to the fact that instead of clarifying the minds of the workers, they becloud them, instead of dispersing petty-bourgeois illusions, they instil them, instead of freeing the masses from petty-bourgeois influence, they consolidate that influence . . ."

There is a legend invented by the bourgeoisie and the philistines of the "socialist" camp that the February Revolution was a bloodless revolution, unlike the "sanguinary bacchanalia" of the Bolshevik October Revolution. The truth is that it was rather the October Revolution that was a bloodless revolution. The February Revolution cost the masses, of course, inevitably, a relatively large number of victims. One thousand three hundred and eighty-two persons were killed on the streets of Petrograd. True, there were

\* Lenin, "A Dual Power," *Selected Works*, Vol VI\*

hardly any victims in the provinces, which is explained by the fact that with the loss of power in the capital, the machinery of the tsarist government became completely disorganised.

### *The Party at the Moment of Revolution*

What was the position of the Party at the outbreak of the February Revolution? It should first be noted that the workers won their victory in the streets of Petrograd fighting under Bolshevik slogans, and that the Bolshevik Party formed the revolutionary vanguard. In spite of the liquidators and Trotskyists, who in reality were in favour of establishing themselves legally under the Stolypin regime, curtailing the revolutionary demands and replacing them by the demand for freedom of coalition, and so forth, the Bolshevik Party throughout the long years of gloomy reaction, then throughout the period of the new rising revolutionary wave, and finally during the world imperialist war, had systematically and incessantly called upon the workers to undertake a revolutionary struggle against the tsarist regime for the establishment of a democratic republic, for the confiscation of the estates of the landlords and for an eight-hour working day. The Bolsheviks had always maintained that the revolution would grow from a democratic revolution into a socialist revolution. During the war, despite the defencists, who advocated supporting the imperialist war, at least "non-resistance" to it, and despite the platonic internationalists of the type of Martov and Trotsky, the Bolshevik Party had called upon the masses to transform the imperialist war into a civil war and had appealed to the soldiers to turn their weapons against the tsarist government. The February victory—the revolutionary overthrow of tsarism and the passing of the troops over to the side of the insurgent masses—was a brilliant victory for Bolshevism.

"Despite the arrest and the exile to Siberia of our Deputies in 1914, despite the severest persecutions and arrests which the Petrograd Committee had suffered throughout the war for its underground activity against war and against tsarism, our Party was found with the masses, with the revolutionary proletariat. . . The fact that during the great days of the revolution our Party was leading or at least bravely helping the Petrograd workers had to be admitted by the English Guchkovist himself" \*

\* Lenin, "Letters from Afar, II," *Collected Works*, Vol XX, Book I.

"English Guchkovist" was the epithet applied by Lenin to a British journalist who had reported to his paper the tremendous authority enjoyed by the Bolsheviks among the Petrograd proletariat. But the repressions heaped upon the Party during the years of war, the practically universal destruction of its legal organisations, the closing down of its legal press and the violent persecution it had been subjected to on account of its defeatist views, had placed the Party in an extremely difficult position.

The local Party organisations had been subjected to constant raids and arrests. a vast number of their members were in prison or in exile, where the revolution found Stalin, Sverdlov, and many others. It was some time before these comrades could return. Lenin's return was accompanied by still greater difficulties. We know what hindrances were placed in the way of his return to Russia and what slanderous use was made by the White Guards of his passage through Germany (although Martov and other Mensheviks returned with him).

In spite of severe repressive measures, the Bolshevik Party developed intensive activity. On the eve of the revolution the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee was quartered in Petrograd and consisted of Molotov, Shlyapnikov and Zalutsky. In the early part of 1917 it had contacts with Tver, Nizhni-Novgorod, Kazan, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav and the Urals (Perm and Ekaterinburg). The organisations in Petrograd and Moscow were the largest and most firmly established. They conducted widespread and fairly systematic activities. A number of organisations (Kiev, the Donets Basin, the Volga provinces and Siberia) were not in contact with the Bureau of the C. C. and worked independently.

During the war the character of the proletariat had changed. At the very outbreak of the war the best of the revolutionary cadres had been sent to the front where many of them perished. The factories were filled by raw masses from the villages and by what were known as "self-defenders," that is, individuals dodging mobilisation. The result was that at the beginning of the revolution it was largely Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who were elected to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies. Their influence in the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies was still greater.

Finally, the early days of the revolution witnessed a flow of new workers into the Party organisations; these were revolution-



ary-minded, but still without adequate political training, and in part still unable to grasp the profound difference between the principles and tactics of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, particularly since the latter concealed their real character by revolutionary phrases. This explains the tendency which revealed itself in certain of the provincial organisations to unite with the Mensheviks, a tendency against which the Party and the Central Committee were obliged to conduct a determined struggle. When the Provisional Government was established, the Bureau of the C.C. unhesitatingly described it as a government of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

The following resolution was passed by the Bureau of the C.C. in regard to the Provisional Government:

"Considering that the Provisional Government is a class government of the bourgeoisie and the large landlords, and that it is endeavouring to reduce the present democratic revolution to the mere replacement of one ruling clique by another, and that it is therefore incapable of realising the fundamental demands of the people, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies [the resolution was intended for adoption by the Soviet—N.P.] is of the opinion that:

"1) the main task is the struggle for the creation of a Provisional Revolutionary Government, which alone will be able to realise those fundamental demands,

"2) the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies must reserve for itself complete freedom of action in the selection of means of realising the fundamental demands of the revolutionary people, and in particular in the selection of means of influencing the Provisional Government;

"3) the establishment of control over the Provisional Government in the form of a special Control Commission of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is a palliative measure incapable of achieving its purpose, *viz*, control over the realisation of the fundamental demands of the revolutionary democracy."

The overwhelming majority of the Party was opposed to rendering any sort of assistance to the Provisional Government. But the situation was extraordinarily complicated. A strategical stage of tremendous importance in the history of the Party had come to an end, namely, the stage in which the main aim was the overthrow of the tsarist monarchy. A new strategical stage had commenced. As Stalin wrote:

"This was a very great turning point in the history of Russia and an unprecedented turn in the history of our Party. The old pre-revolutionary platform of the direct overthrow of the government was clear

and definite, but it no longer fitted the new conditions of struggle. Now it was no longer possible to advance directly to the overthrow of the government, because it was bound up with the Soviets, which were under the influence of the defencists, and the Party would have had to wage war both against the government and against the Soviets, which was beyond its strength. However, it was also impossible to follow the policy of supporting the Provisional Government, for it was a government of imperialism. In the new conditions of struggle a new orientation of the Party became necessary. The Party (its majority) gropingly proceeded to this new orientation. It adopted the policy of having the Soviets exercise pressure on the Provisional Government in the question of peace, and did not venture all at once to take any step beyond the old slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry to the new slogan of the rule of the Soviets. This half-way policy was intended to enable the Soviets to perceive the truly imperialist nature of the Provisional Government from the concrete questions of peace and thereby rip the Soviets loose from the Provisional Government.”<sup>\*</sup>

In an article written immediately upon his return from exile and published in *Pravda* of March 14, 1917, Stalin outlined a course directed towards the creation of a government of the Soviets:

“The more compact these Soviets [*i.e.*, of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies—*NP*], and the more strongly they are organised, the more genuinely do they express the revolutionary power of the revolutionary people and the more certain is the guarantee provided against counter-revolution.

“Revolutionary Social-Democrats must work to strengthen these Soviets, to make them universal, to establish contact between them under a Central Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies as the organ of the revolutionary power of the people.”<sup>††</sup>

A resolution passed by the Bureau of the Central Committee and published in *Pravda* of March 26, 1917, stated:

“The Provisional Government set up by the moderate bourgeois classes of society and associated in interests with Anglo-French capital is incapable of solving the problems raised by the revolution. Its resistance to the further extension and deepening of the revolution is being paralysed only by the growth of the revolutionary forces themselves and by their organisation. Their rallying centre must be the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies in the cities and the Soviets of Peasants’ and Agricultural Workers’ Deputies in the countryside as the embryo of a revolutionary government, prepared in the further process of development, at a definite moment of the revolution, to establish the full power of the proletariat in alliance with the revolutionary

<sup>\*</sup> Stalin, “Trotskyism or Leninism,” *The October Revolution*.

<sup>††</sup> Stalin, *The Path to October*.

democracy, for the purpose of completely carrying into effect the demands of the insurgent people."

"Left" tendencies began to appear in the Party and expressed themselves in attempts to raise immediately the question of the overthrow of the Provisional Government on the plea that it was a counter-revolutionary government; but the fact was ignored that the latter held a peculiar position and was playing a peculiar role owing to the existence of a dual government and to the connections of the Provisional Government with the Soviets.

Immediately upon his arrival in Russia Lenin declared:

"... Our comrades ... are mistaken in regarding the question simply as one of overthrowing the Provisional Government immediately.

"My answer is: 1) it should be overthrown, for it is an oligarchical, bourgeois, and not a people's government, and *cannot* provide peace, or bread, or complete freedom; 2) it cannot be overthrown now, for it is being maintained by a direct and indirect, by a formal and actual agreement with the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, and particularly with the most important of them, the Petrograd Soviet; 3) generally speaking, it cannot be 'overthrown' by any ordinary method, for it rests on the 'support' given to the bourgeoisie by the *second* government—the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, which is the only possible revolutionary government directly expressing the mind and the will of the majority of the workers and peasants. . .

"To become the power, the class-conscious workers must win a majority. *As long as* no violence is used against the masses, there is no other road to power .

"The class-conscious workers stand for the sole power of the Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies. They stand for a single power, made possible not by dubious adventures, but by the enlightenment of the proletarian consciousness." \*

On the other hand, there were elements within the Party, and even among its leaders, who inclined towards defencism and to the support of the Provisional Government. This was particularly true of Kamenev, who from the very outbreak of the war disagreed with the position adopted by Lenin. At the trial of the Bolshevik fraction of the Duma (together with whom he was arrested), he endeavoured to dissociate himself from the position of the Party, for which he was severely rebuked by Lenin.

Kamenev on March 15, 1917 wrote:

"Our slogan is not the disorganisation of the army, which is revolutionary and becoming revolutionised, and not the meaningless cry of 'Down with the War'! When army is facing army it would be a most

\* Lenin, "A Dual Power," *Selected Works*, Vol VI

foolish policy to propose to one of those armies to lay down its arms and return home. That would be not a policy of peace, but a policy of slavery, a policy which a free people would reject with disgust. No, it would firmly stick to its post, answering bullet with bullet and shell with shell. That is inevitable." \*

Even before Lenin's return, the Central Committee and the Petrograd Committee were obliged to call Kamenev to account.

### *The Position of Lenin*

Lenin in his *Letters from Afar* immediately summed up the character of the February Revolution. He asserted that the revolution had placed a bourgeois imperialist government in power, to which the Party should give neither confidence nor support. The Party must prepare the way by agitation and propaganda for the replacement of that government by a Soviet government.

"The only *guarantee of liberty* and of the complete destruction of tsarism is to *arm the proletariat*, to strengthen, extend and develop the role, the significance and power of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies." \*\*

"Workers, you have displayed marvels of proletarian heroism, the heroism of the people, in the civil war against tsarism; you must display marvels of proletarian and nation-wide organisation in order to prepare for victory in the second stage of the revolution." \*\*\*

Lenin considered that the government could not bring about a democratic peace because it was an imperialist government. A democratic peace could be secured only by ruthlessly exposing the imperialist character of the Provisional Government, by mobilising the masses of the workers, soldiers and peasants against it, and by transforming the Soviets, which shared the power with the bourgeois imperialist government, into organs endowed with exclusive and plenary powers of government. Such was Lenin's position.

His policy was not to make demands of the Provisional Government which were contrary to its class character, but to prepare for the replacement of that government by a proletarian government.

\* The full text of this article is contained in the *Materials* appended to Vol XX of Lenin's *Collected Works*

\*\* Lenin, "Letters from Afar, I," *Selected Works*, Vol. VI.

\*\*\* *Ibid*

A Party conference (consisting of the Bolshevik delegates to the All-Russian Conference of Soviets) was held towards the end of March. At this conference a group made itself evident which went even further than the semi-national-defencist position held by Kamenev. The members of this group, headed by Voytinsky (now on the staff of *Vorwärts*) and Sevruck, adopted a purely Menshevik position. At the Conference of Soviets, on the question of the war, they voted for the defencist resolution of Tsereteli (rejected even by the Menshevik Internationalists). This group was driven out of the March Party Conference and expelled from the Party. It comprised an insignificant minority at the March conference and had practically no contacts with the Party organisations.

Kamenev for his part made glaring concessions at the Conference of Soviets to the prevailing defencist majority both on the question of war and, particularly, on the question of the attitude to be adopted towards the Provisional Government.

But soon after the Conference of the Soviets closed Lenin arrived in Russia. His return helped the Party to make a rapid transition, which it had already begun, from the old slogans to new slogans, slogans necessitated by the beginning of a new strategic phase, when the immediate task was no longer to overthrow tsarism, but to overthrow the imperialist bourgeoisie, not to establish a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, which had been partially effected by the February Revolution, (*i.e.*, side by side with the bourgeois Provisional Government, representing the dictatorship of the imperialist bourgeoisie) but to establish a socialist dictatorship of the proletariat.

#### *• Lenin's Return to Russia: The April Theses*

Lenin arrived in Russia on April 4, 1917, just after the All-Russian Conference of Soviets terminated. He met with an enthusiastic welcome from the Petrograd workers. The delegates to the conference had not yet dispersed, and Lenin's first public appearance was made at a meeting of the Bolshevik fraction of the Conference followed by a meeting of the Bolshevik and Menshevik delegates. The essence of Lenin's speech is set forth in what is known as the April Theses, which gave the Party a new lead in the new strategical phase of the struggle. The Theses first of all

clearly emphasised the fact that the war was an imperialist war and that it had retained that character even though the monarchy in Russia had been overthrown. Neither to this war, nor to the government that was responsible for its conduct, could the Party offer the slightest support. On the war front the duty of the Party was not to organise resistance to German imperialism, as the defencists advocated, but to organise fraternisation between the Russian and German soldiers.

Lenin called for a ruthless exposure of the government.

"No support must be given to the Provisional Government; the utter falsity of all its promises must be exposed, particularly those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Exposure is what is required, and not the illusion-breeding 'demand' that *this* government, a government of capitalists, should *cease* to be an imperialist government. The specific character of the present situation in Russia is that it represents a *transition* from the first stage of the revolution, which because of the inadequate organisation and insufficient class consciousness of the proletariat, led to the assumption of power by the bourgeoisie—to the second stage, which must place the power into the hands of the proletariat and the poor strata of the peasantry." \*

In the April Theses, Lenin boldly put forward the slogan "All Power to the Soviets." One of the fundamental tasks of the Party he declared, was to explain

"... to the masses that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies is the only possible form of revolutionary government and that therefore our task is, as long as this government submits to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent explanation of its errors and tactics, an explanation especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses" \*\*

The slogan "All power to the Soviets" arose out of the whole preceding tactics of the Party. In a resolution which Lenin as early as 1906 drew up for the Fourth Party Congress, the Soviets are referred to as the embryonic organs of revolutionary government. Earlier still, at the Third Congress, Lenin had demanded the creation of peasants' committees, which were to effect the seizure of the estates of the landlords and the establishment of a new order in the rural districts. The Soviets in 1905 were *embryonic* organs because they were never permitted to mature, being destroyed at birth.

\* Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," *Selected Works*, Vol VI

\*\* *Ibid*

But now the Soviets had become the organs of triumphant revolution the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" arose naturally from the course of events. The Party had been moving towards this slogan even before Lenin returned. Now, however, the demand was not merely for a government by Soviets, but for a Soviet republic, a Soviet state, as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Owing to the fact that the majority in the Soviets was still dominated by the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s, Lenin in his Theses declared that the policy of the Party must be to explain patiently and systematically to the masses the mistakes and treachery committed by the conciliationist parties, in order that the masses might be led by their own experience to break with the conciliators.

The chief economic demands advanced in the Theses were as follows: the nationalisation of the land and the transformation of the large landed estates into model socialised farms, the amalgamation of all the banks into one single national bank, and the immediate placing of production and distribution under the control of the Soviets.

In the concluding part of the Theses, Lenin raised the question of changing the name of the Party and of revising the Party programme by introducing points dealing with imperialism and the organisation of a Soviet state.

Lenin in the Theses thus advocated a Republic of Soviets as the form of the dictatorship of the working class and the poor peasantry.

"Not a parliamentary republic—a return to it from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a step backward—but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies, throughout the land, from top to bottom." \*

Hitherto all parliamentary republics, a tremendous advance though that form of government was as compared with absolute monarchy, were organically bound up with the capitalist system. Could the Party rest content with the establishment of a democratic republic? The situation was now riper for the accomplishment of socialism internationally than in 1905, when Lenin had also declared that there could be no stopping half-way.

\* *Ibid.*

The Revolution of 1905 took place at a period when political calm reigned in Europe. The Revolution of 1917 took place during the period of the world imperialist war, when millions of workers and peasants were in possession of arms which could be directed against their enemies. A Soviet government in 1905 could have been, at least at first, the realisation of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. But now this dictatorship already existed, true, in peculiar combination with the dictatorship of the imperialist bourgeoisie. But the question was not only one of removing the bourgeoisie. The Party could not content itself with the creation of a purely revolutionary democratic dictatorship. That was the position not of the Party, but of opportunists like Kamenev.

The aim was now one which could only be just discerned in 1905-06, *viz.*, the growing of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution. This would at the same time involve the growing of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry (which existed side by side with the dictatorship of the imperialist bourgeoisie) into a dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasants.

### *The Party and the Agrarian Question*

Both in the Theses and in his articles Lenin laid great emphasis on the demand for the confiscation of the estates of the landlords. This demand was contained in the manifesto of the Central Committee of the Party of February 26, 1917. The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries claimed that a Constituent Assembly alone was empowered to hand over the landlords' estates to the peasantry, and until that lordly institution uttered its judgment not an inch of the estates of the landlords must be touched. Naturally, the landlords and the imperialist bourgeoisie were not overmuch disturbed at the thought of what the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s might carry through in a Constituent Assembly that would meet nobody knew when. The important thing for them was that the peasants should not touch the land now, at the present moment, and from that point of view the attitude of the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s suited them completely.

As regards the summoning of the Constituent Assembly, the opinion of the imperialist bourgeoisie on this subject was expressed



by their responsible representatives, Guchkov, for instance, who from the very outset declared that it were better if the summoning of the Constituent Assembly were postponed until the successful conclusion of the war. They were perfectly well aware that if the war ended in victory, the position of the bourgeoisie would be so strengthened that they could dispense with the Constituent Assembly passing the compulsory alienation of the landlords estates without compensation, and even dispense with the Constituent Assembly itself.

Lenin emphatically demanded that peasants' committees and Soviets of Peasants' and Agricultural Workers' Deputies should be set up immediately, in order that they might forthwith set about the organised seizure of the landed estates. The Mensheviks and the S.R.'s raised an outcry, declaring that the Bolsheviks were creating anarchy, that blood would be spilt in the villages, that the peasants would come to blows over the division of the land, the soldiers would desert the front, counter-revolution would set in, and so on, and so forth—distinct proof that these parties of compromise were following the lead of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. As a matter of fact, the Bolsheviks were making no anarchist innovations of any kind. Lenin as early as 1906, in his pamphlet *The Dissolution of the Duma and the Tasks of the Proletariat*, had declared that when the insurrection broke out the peasants must immediately proceed to take over the land without awaiting the sanction of a Constituent Assembly.<sup>1</sup> But an essential difference now existed as compared with the first revolution. Now it was a question not only of peasants' Soviets but also of agricultural labourers' Soviets. The merging of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution inevitably meant that the class war in the rural districts would become extremely acute. Preparations had to be made for the suppression of the peasant bourgeoisie and for the organisation of the poor peasants, particularly the section that was most akin to the working class—the agricultural proletariat. The Bolsheviks had spoken of the importance of the agricultural proletariat during the first revolution, but it had now become a factor of exclusive political significance.

\* The Bolshevik draft for the agrarian programme presented to the Fourth (Stockholm) Congress also demanded the confiscation of estates by peasant committees until such time as a Constituent Assembly would legislate land redistribution.

*The Kamenev Opposition to Lenin's Theses*

Such in general and brief outline was the strategical and tactical line laid down for the Party by Lenin in his April Theses. Against this line Kamenev started a controversy in the pages of *Pravda*. In his opinion the adoption of Lenin's theses would transform the Party into a group of propagandists.

Kamenev endeavoured to prove that the transition from the democratic revolution to a socialist revolution would mean an immediate rupture with the peasantry and the isolation of the proletariat, thereby dooming it to inevitable defeat. Kamenev found a number of supporters in Moscow, where they were headed by Nogin, whereas Lukin, speaking at the Moscow Regional Conference of the Party on the policy of the Bolsheviks in the Constituent Assembly, declared that the object of that policy must be to consolidate the democratic republic. The Moscow Regional Conference by an overwhelming vote rejected the point of view of the opposition. After the appearance of Lenin's theses a number of individuals who had formerly passed as Bolsheviks found it necessary to sever their connection with the Party.

A group of such one-time Bolsheviks, many of whom had formerly played a prominent part in the revolution and in the work of the Party (Goldenberg-Meshkovsky, a former member of the Central Committee of the Party, V. Bazarov, B. Avilov, Y. M. Steklov, a prominent member of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, Desnitsky-Stroev, A. Bogdanov, Volsky, Lindov and others), now organised themselves around the paper *Novaya Zhizn* (*The New Life*). The *Novaya Zhizn*-ists regarded themselves as Zimmerwald Internationalists and demanded that the Provisional Government should pursue a policy of peace. At times they sharply criticised the defencist majority in the Soviets, but actually did not differ from them. They firmly declared that the revolution in Russia could be no other than a bourgeois-democratic revolution, and that the Bolsheviks, if they were to remain true to the old political line of 1905-07, could hold no other opinion. The *Novaya Zhizn*-ists did not regard the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry as a stage towards the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, but as a brief stage preliminary to a more or less prolonged period of power of the capitalists. The views of the

*Novaya Zhizn* were a species of Menshevism in an old Bolshevik make-up. It was these opportunist elements in the Bolshevik Party (as well as the heroes of the Second International) that Stalin had in mind when he wrote:

"They asserted (and keep on asserting) that between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the proletarian revolution there is a chasm, or at any rate a Chinese Wall separating one from the other by a period of time more or less protracted, in the course of which the bourgeoisie, having come into power, develops capitalism, while the proletariat accumulates forces and prepares for the 'decisive struggle' against capitalism. This interval is supposed to extend over many decades, if not longer. That this Chinese Wall 'theory' is totally devoid of scientific meaning under imperialism hardly needs to be proved. It is and can be only a means of concealing and camouflaging the counter-revolutionary aspirations of the bourgeoisie" \*

During the discussion of Lenin's Theses at a meeting of the delegates to the Council of Soviets, Goldenberg-Meshkovsky declared that they represented a return to the anarchism of Bakunin. The *Novaya Zhizn*-ists definitely advocated the formation of a united Social-Democratic Party embracing both the national defencists and the internationalists. In support of their argument they referred to the experience of 1906-07 when a united party was formally in existence. Here we have an example of how the spirit of revolutionary doctrine may be distorted while apparently being observed in the letter. The Bolsheviks in 1905 favoured a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, although Lenin frequently wrote that the democratic revolution would be a prelude to the socialist revolution. It is a fact that the Bolsheviks in 1905 did not demand a Soviet republic.

Distorting the position held by Lenin in 1905, the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists portrayed him as a common bourgeois democrat, to whom at that time presumably it never occurred to regard socialism as a matter of practical politics. Russia, the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists argued, was still a backward country and still unprepared for socialism, particularly after three years of war which had disrupted the economic life of the country; whereas, as everybody knew, socialism implied wealth and abundance and the capacity to satisfy all material needs. How, in that case, could one not accuse Lenin of having entirely wandered away from Marxism and the Bolshevism of former days?

\* Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism," *Leninism*, Vol. I. •

Kamenev's criticism of Lenin's Theses had many points in common with the criticism of *Novaya Zhizn*. The only difference was that the *Novaya Zhizn*-ists were more consistent than Kamenev: they adopted the Menshevik position entirely.

But in spite of all this, the Party pursued its own way. Even in 1905 its policy aimed at the growth of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution. In the twelve years that had elapsed since 1905, Russia had made tremendous strides in the direction of capitalist development, as shown by the powerful expansion of heavy industry and transport, the creation of vast monopolistic capitalist amalgamations and the fusion of industrial capital with banking capital. The World War had rendered the socialist revolution an immediate possibility in every large capitalist country, although nowhere had the revolution actually materialised. In 1915 Lenin had already definitely declared that the victory of socialism was possible in one single country. Now that the tsarist monarchy had been overthrown and the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies had sprung up on its ruins side by side with the government of the imperialist bourgeoisie, the socialist revolution had become a practical possibility in Russia too.

Kamenev and his supporters considered that Russia was far too backward to permit the socialist revolution being started before it had been accomplished in Western Europe. But in spite of the opposition to Lenin's Theses, the majority of the Party organisations (among them the Petrograd Committee and the Central Bureau of the Moscow Province), some immediately, and others soon after Lenin's return, accepted his point of view. It was also adopted by the broad Party masses. Could this have occurred had the opportunist views of Kamenev and his followers had any roots in the Party, and had the Party not been prepared by its whole preceding policy, particularly in 1905, during the period of the imperialist war, and in the period February-March 1917, to pass from the slogan of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry to the slogan of a socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat?

The Trotskyists and the Right opportunists have gone to great lengths in distorting the history of the Party in the period of the February Revolution in order to represent the Party at that period as being merely the "Left wing" of the Menshevik-S.R. revolution-

ary democrats. This was essential to the Trotskyists and the Rights in order to demonstrate that the Party, by adopting Lenin's Theses and by adopting the socialist revolution as a practical and immediate task, had broken with its past history and re-armed itself. The slanders of the Trotskyists and the Rights are disproved by the facts

### *The Seventh (April 1917) Conference*

It was under such circumstances that the Seventh (April) Conference of the Party was summoned. This Conference played an extremely important part in the history of the Party. The Party had already become a broad *mass organisation*. In the two months that had elapsed since the February Revolution the Party organisation had managed to extend its influence very widely among the working class masses. One hundred and thirty-three delegates were present at the Conference, representing a membership of 76,000 organised workers.

The April Conference showed that the Party had emerged from its underground illegal position considerably strengthened in numbers. It is enough to mention that the number represented at a conference of Mensheviks and allied organisations that followed soon after was less than half the number of Party members (not to speak of actual workers).

The conference discussed all important questions concerning the policy of the Party towards the revolution, the current political situation, attitude towards the Provisional Government, a coalition ministry, the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the uniting of the internationalists against the petty-bourgeois defencist *bloc*, the situation within the Second International, the war, the agrarian and national questions, and the revision of the Party programme.

The opportunist elements, who attempted at the April Conference to carry through their own policy against the line of the Party, met with complete discomfiture. Lenin's view triumphed on every question discussed at the Conference. The April Conference laid it down that the aim of the Party must be not merely to bring the democratic revolution to completion, but to transform the revolution into a socialist revolution and to establish the dic-

tatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasantry. The Conference indicated a number of economic measures to serve as steps towards socialism (nationalisation of the land and the banks, compulsory reorganisation of industry into trusts, workers' control over production, etc.).

This point of view, however, was not shared by all the delegates at the Conference. Kamenev made a counter-report to Lenin's report on the current political situation. Kamenev's view was that pressure should be exerted on the imperialist government and that control should be set up over it, instead of bluntly demanding that it should be replaced by a new government. He again declared that the transformation of the revolution into a socialist revolution would lead to a rupture between the working class and the peasantry and would doom the working class to inevitable defeat.

On the question of the attitude to be adopted towards the government, the position taken by the Conference was clear and unambiguous: it demanded the overthrow of the government and its replacement by a Soviet government. True, this did not mean that the call was to be issued for the immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government. Prior to the Conference, during the April demonstrations in Petrograd, when the masses, outraged by Milyukov's note to the Allies, flocked into the streets to utter their protest against the Provisional Government, the Central Committee of the Party had passed a resolution plainly declaring that the time was not yet ripe for calling upon the masses immediately to overthrow the government, since that demand had not yet been adopted by the broad masses, since the Soviets were still supporting the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and since the workers and soldiers, as Lenin put it, still honestly entertained defencist illusions. Before the overthrow of the government could become a practical possibility the masses must be won over to the Bolshevik point of view. The Conference recommended that, in order to draw the masses away from the government and to win them over to the Party, merciless political war should be waged against the government.

"One cannot jump out of the imperialist war," Lenin wrote in his pamphlet *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*, "one cannot attain a democratic, non-coercive peace without overthrowing the

power of capital, without the state power passing to a different class, the proletariat." \*

The resolution defining the attitude to be adopted towards the war and the resolution on the situation within the International were adopted almost unanimously. What line was the Party to adopt in organising the international proletariat against the imperialist war? The resolution noted the existence of three currents among the European socialists: 1) social-chauvinists; 2) the so-called Centre, which disguised its support of the war, and 3) the revolutionary internationalists, who in every country had begun a fight against the war. The resolution of the Conference severely criticised the Zimmerwald majority for not definitely breaking with Centrism and the Second International. Lenin had even prior to the Conference declared in favour of the Party retiring from Zimmerwald; nevertheless, the Conference confined itself to sharply criticising the attitude of the Zimmerwald majority. Lenin regarded this half-measure as a mistake. In connection with the discussion of the position in the West-European Socialist parties, the Conference had to deal with the question of summoning a conference of all socialists for the purpose of discussing the question of peace. This proposal was brought to Petrograd by the representative of the Danish Social-Democrats, Bjørborg, who in fact was an emissary of the German Social-Democrats—the Scheidemannists. The Conference declared itself opposed to all negotiations or conferences with social patriots who supported the imperialist war.

### *Agrarian and National Questions*

On the agrarian question a resolution was adopted demanding the immediate confiscation of the estates of the landlords and the organisation of peasants' committees for the purpose of carrying this measure into effect. A small group of eleven persons refrained from voting on this question. The resolution stated that

"nationalisation of the land [which the Bolsheviks had advocated as early as at the Fourth, (Stockholm) Congress—*N.P.*], while being in reality a bourgeois measure, offered the greatest possible freedom for the class struggle and for land tenure freed of all non-bourgeois [*i.e.*, pre-capitalist—*N.P.*] appendages conceivable in a capitalist so-

\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Book I.

ciety. Furthermore, nationalisation of the land, by abolishing private property in land, would in practice aim so powerful a blow at private property in the means of production in general, that the Party must support this reform in every possible way."

The resolution went on to say that

"the more decisive and consistent the bourgeois-democratic agrarian reform of Russia in general, the more forcibly and rapidly will the class war of the agricultural proletariat against the wealthy peasantry develop. . . .

"The fate and issue of the Russian revolution will depend on whether the urban proletariat succeeds in gaining the support of the agricultural proletariat and the adherence of the mass of the rural semi-proletarians, or whether these masses follow the peasant bourgeoisie, who are tending to ally themselves with the Guchkovs and the Milyukovs . . . and the counter-revolution in general, unless the proletarian revolution which is beginning in Europe exerts a direct and powerful influence on our country."

The resolution recommended that the Party should

"immediately proceed everywhere to undertake the separate and independent organisation of the agricultural proletariat, both in the form of Soviets of Agricultural Workers' Deputies (as well as of separate Soviets of deputies of the semi-proletarian peasantry) and in the form of proletarian groups and fractions within the general Soviets of Peasants' Deputies."

The report on the national question was made by Stálin. Pyatakov made a counter-report. Pyatakov presented the Luxemburg view on the national question, which considered the demand for the right of self-determination under conditions of imperialism as a reactionary slogan. All national movements, according to this view, inasmuch as they made for the partition of the great states, were counter to the interests of economic development and to the progress of society towards socialism. Accordingly, Social-Democrats must vigorously oppose all such movements.

At the April Conference the Russian and the Polish supporters of the Luxemburg views united against Stalin. Their policy would have entirely deprived the working class of the possibility of employing the national problem as a revolutionary factor in the struggle against imperialism. The fundamental thesis of Stalin's report, which was based on Lenin's views, was the recognition of the right of the peoples inhabiting Russia to self-determination even to the extent of secession. Such nations as preferred not to secede were to be granted national and territorial autonomy;



national minorities were to be protected by special laws guaranteeing freedom of development. Emphasis was laid on the necessity for united political and trade union organisations embracing the workers of all nationalities.

During the discussion on Stalin's report, Lenin vigorously attacked the Luxemburgists:

"Ever since 1903, when our Party adopted its programme, we have been encountering the desperate opposition of the Poles. A study of the minutes of the Second Congress reveals that even then the Poles were advancing the same argument that they are advancing now, and that the Polish Social-Democrats had left the Congress because our recognition of the right of nations to self-determination was unacceptable to them. And we have been confronted with this question ever since. Though imperialism was already in existence in 1903, there was no mention made of it in the arguments then advanced. And the position of the Polish Social-Democracy is as strange and monstrous an error now as it was then. These people wish to reduce the stand of our Party to that of 'great-power' chauvinism."<sup>4</sup>

Stalin's resolution was adopted by 76 votes against 18, with 32 abstentions.<sup>\*</sup>

### *Revision of the Party Programme*

The final resolution adopted by the Conference dealt with the revision of the Party programme. The programme of 1903, with its addition on the agrarian question of 1906, had become out-of-date. The Conference resolved that a new theoretical foundation must be given to the programme: the demand for a new type of state must be included and the whole of the minimum programme revised.

The programme must also declare its attitude towards the split in the international Social-Democratic movement that had taken place during the war.

Not long prior to the Conference, Lenin drafted the changes to be introduced into the Party programme. Parts of the old programme were to be retained. The introductory passage was to read as follows:

<sup>\*</sup> Lenin, "Speech on the National Question, May 12, 1917," *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Book I.

<sup>\*\*</sup> This vote shows that the tendency to underestimate the importance of the national question, and to adopt an oversimplified attitude towards the problem, was prevalent among certain sections of the Party. Lenin in 1917 vigorously fought this tendency.

"At the present moment in Russia, when the Provisional Government, which is part and parcel of the capitalist class and enjoys the confidence—the necessarily shaky confidence—of the vast masses of the petty-bourgeois population, has undertaken to convene a Constituent Assembly, the party of the proletariat is confronted with the immediate task of striving for a system of state organisation which would best secure economic progress and the rights of the people in general and the possibility of a painless transition to socialism in particular

"The party of the proletariat cannot confine itself to a bourgeois parliamentary democratic republic, which throughout the world maintains and strives to perpetuate monarchist means of oppressing the masses, namely, the police, the standing army, and the privileged bureaucracy.

"The Party fights for a more democratic workers' and peasants' republic, wherein the police and the standing army would be completely eliminated and replaced by a general arming of the people, by a universal militia, all the officers would be not only elective, but also subject to instant recall at the request of a majority of electors, . . . all representative parliamentary institutions would gradually give place to Soviets of the people's representatives (from various classes and professions, or from various localities), functioning both as legislative and executive bodies"

In his pamphlet *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution* Lenin had written.

"This is the type of state which the Russian revolution *began* to create in the years 1905 and 1917. A Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants (and other) Deputies, united in an All-Russian Constituent Assembly of the people's representatives or in a Council of Soviets, etc., is what is being *realised* in our country now, at this juncture, by the initiative of millions of people who, of their own accord, are creating a democracy *in their own way*. . . ." \*†

And Lenin goes on to say.

"The sooner we cast off the old prejudices of a Marxism which has been falsified and distorted by Plekhanov, Kautsky and Co., the more diligently we set about helping the people everywhere and immediately to organise Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, the latter to take *all aspects* of life under their control, and the longer Messrs Lvov and Co. delay the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the easier it will be for the people (through the medium of the Constituent Assembly, or independently of the Constituent Assembly, if Lvov delays its convocation too long) to make its decision in favour of a Republic of Soviets." \*\*\*

\* Lenin, "Materials Relating to the Revision of the Party Programme," *Collected Works*, Vol XX, Book I

\*\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol VI.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*

Lenin's draft for the new programme also contained a point demanding the immediate and compulsory organisation of trusts and banks controlled by the state.

### *Triumph Over Opportunism*

The brief period that elapsed between the February Revolution and the April Conference was one of undoubted historical importance in the life of the Party.\*

It determined the strategy and tactics of the Party in a new period, the period which was to witness the seizure of power by the proletariat in a socialist revolution.

In the previous chapter we saw what genius Lenin displayed in determining the tactical policy of the Party in the revolution a year and a half before the revolution broke out.

The strategy and tactics consisted in effecting the democratic revolution in conjunction with the peasantry and in bringing about a transition to the socialist revolution in conjunction with the poor peasants. For this purpose it was necessary that the proletariat should gain a majority and secure the support of large masses of the petty bourgeoisie by inducing them to break with the social-chauvinists.

The appearance of large masses of the petty bourgeoisie in the political arena, the changes that had taken place in the social composition of the proletariat and the relative organisational weakness of the Party in relation to the great historical tasks that confronted it—all these factors could not but stimulate the activities of the opportunist elements within the Party.

What were the tendencies displayed by these opportunist elements? These tendencies were to submerge the Party of the proletariat in the petty-bourgeois sea of "revolutionary democracy," to renounce the leadership of the working class in the developing bourgeois-democratic revolution, not to carry that revolution to its completion and not to effect its transformation into a socialist revolution. The Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary Soviets surrendered the power to the bourgeoisie while (on paper) reserving for themselves the right to control its actions and jog it to the "Left" in the name of revolutionary democracy. The opportunists

\* The April Conference elected a Central Committee consisting of Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev, Milyutin, Nogin, Sverdlov, Smilga and Fedorov.

among the Bolsheviks were very close to this position, which regarded it as expedient that the Soviets should exist only temporarily, until such time "as the new order shall have been consolidated." Thereupon, the Soviets were to give way to the Constituent Assembly in the capital and to the urban and rural local government bodies in the cities and the countryside. The aim was to guarantee a prolonged existence for the bourgeois-democratic regime (undoubtedly a piece of pure Menshevism), in relation to which the working class was to adopt the attitude of an opposition. In the opinion of the Right opportunists within the Party, to demand the transformation of the revolution into a socialist revolution in such a backward country as Russia, which, moreover, was disrupted and impoverished by the war, would be a piece of risky adventurism. The opportunists considered the way out of the war to be a democratic peace without annexations or reparations and, as far as possible, with the preservation of the pre-war state frontiers. The Russian government was to renounce all conquests or gains from the war and to make a similar proposition to the other governments, meanwhile continuing the war until a satisfactory reply should have been obtained. The fact that military operations had been dragging on for nearly three years would, it was argued, favour the conclusion of a peace of mutual compromise between the imperialist powers.

The influence of the petty bourgeoisie and of petty-bourgeois ideology drove certain members of the Party into Right opportunism. A classic instance of this tendency towards Menshevism and petty-bourgeois ideology is provided by the group of writers, among them former Bolsheviks, who founded the paper *Novaya Zhizn*. It is not surprising that what primarily distinguished these pseudo-Bolsheviks from the genuine Bolsheviks was their tendency to compromise with the Mensheviks and the defencists. But this group exerted a definite influence on certain members of the Party.

What did Lenin propose, as against the elements who were tending towards Menshevism? He proposed a concrete plan based on the growth of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution, and a programme of practical measures for the transition to socialism. This programme grew out of the development of capitalism in Europe and in Russia and the catastrophe of the war itself. But this programme had to break down powerful

traditions that had been cultivated by the Mensheviks during the course of decades and that were shared by certain of the Bolsheviks, traditions to the effect that the socialist revolution could not begin in a backward country and that Russia from the point of view of technical and economic development was the least prepared of all European countries for a socialist revolution. The influence of this tradition was felt even among the Bolsheviks.

"Whoever speaks now of a 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' only is behind the times and has in effect gone over to the side of the petty bourgeoisie and is against the proletarian class struggle. He deserves to be consigned to the archive of 'Bolshevik' pre-revolutionary antiques (which might be called the archive of 'old Bolsheviks')." \*

Lenin now inseparably connected the question of the transformation of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution with the creation of a Commune State, a Soviet republic, as a type superior to the democratic republic. Hitherto the question had not been raised of setting up the Soviets, as a specific form of proletarian dictatorship, as against bourgeois-democratic institutions. Even to some of the Bolsheviks Lenin's theory of a Soviet state appeared to be nothing more than an anarchist betrayal of the democratic traditions of the European Social-Democratic movement. As a matter of fact, Lenin was a faithful and consistent disciple of Marx and Engels, whose theory he developed further.

"The fundamental idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the political domination of the proletariat and as a method of overthrowing the reign of capital by violence was created by Marx and Engels. Lenin's new contribution in this field was that:

"(a) utilising the experience of the Paris Commune and the Russian revolution, he discovered the Soviet form of government as the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat;

"(b) he deciphered the formula of the dictatorship of the proletariat from the point of view of the problem of the allies of the proletariat, and defined the dictatorship of the proletariat as a special form of class alliance between the proletariat, which is the leader, and the exploited masses of the non-proletarian classes (the peasantry, etc.) who are led;

"(c) he particularly emphasised the fact that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a higher type of democracy in class society, i.e., *proletarian democracy*, which expresses the interests of the majority (the exploited) as against capitalist democracy, which expresses the interests of the minority (the exploiters)." \*\*

\* Lenin, "Letters on Tactics," *Selected Works*, Vol. VI

\*\* Stalin, "Interview with the First American Delegation," *Leninism*, Vol. I.

As we know, as early as 1905, the idea of the transformation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the socialist revolution already formed one of the central ideas of Bolshevism. Lenin, both during the Revolution of 1905 and during the World War, several times referred to the possibility and necessity of this development. But now the idea had come within the scope of practical realisation. Trotsky has endeavoured by resorting to the most shameless falsification of historical facts to prove that the Bolsheviks "re-armed" themselves in April 1917 and that they then adopted Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

The assertion that the Bolsheviks "re-armed" themselves in April 1917 played, and still plays, an important part in the struggle waged by the Trotskyists, who have now become the vanguard of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, in their campaign against the Leninist Bolshevik Party. This theory has been sedulously propagated by the Trotskyist contrabandists in the pages of the Party journals and publications.

According to the Trotskyist slanderers and falsifiers of Bolshevism, the Bolsheviks during the first revolution, the world imperialist war and in February and March 1917 favoured the limitation of the activities of the proletariat to the mere consummation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Trotsky in fact wrote:

"The Bolsheviks, proceeding from just such a naked abstraction—a democratic, instead of a socialist dictatorship—arrive at the idea of the proletariat limiting itself to securing a bourgeois-democratic republic."

And later, in 1922, Trotsky wrote of the "anti-revolutionary features" of Bolshevism in 1905, which would have constituted a direct menace in the event of the triumph of the revolution. According to Trotsky, these "anti-revolutionary features" were not revealed until 1922, when Trotsky wrote of them, for the simple reason that the Bolsheviks re-armed themselves ideologically in April 1917. From the point of view of the Menshevik Trotsky, these features revealed themselves only when the Party declared Trotskyism to be a Menshevik deviation and finally expelled him from its ranks.

The Trotskyist slanderers have the audacity to accuse the Bolsheviks of opportunism when, as a matter of fact, Trotsky for many years prior to the 1917 Revolution conducted a bitter war

against Lenin from a Menshevik opportunist standpoint. When Lenin received news of the February Revolution, he wrote to Kollontai:

"In my opinion, our main task is to guard against getting entangled in foolish attempts at 'unity' with the social-patriots (or, what is still more dangerous, with the wavering ones, like the Organisation Committee, Trotsky and Co) and to continue the work of *our own* Party in a consistently *international* spirit." \*

Later, in March and April, the Trotskyists comprised a "Left" Menshevik group, who had still not sufficiently matured to be accepted into the Bolshevik Party. They were infected with the Menshevik denial of the role of the peasantry in the revolution and fought side by side with the Mensheviks against Lenin and his Party. It was not until May and June, when the Trotskyists abandoned their Menshevik tactics (abandoned them temporarily, as the sequel proved) and concealed (also temporarily) their anti-Bolshevik ideology, that the Bolsheviks consented to accept them into the Party.

At the beginning of the 1917 Revolution, Trotsky was still inclined to ignore the peasantry, and hoped that the Russian proletariat would be able to accomplish the revolution alone with the support of the proletariat of Western Europe. Lenin considered it one of the most important tasks to sever the peasant masses from the social-chauvinists and win their support for the proletariat. In April 1917 he wrote that Trotsky's slogan of "no tsar, and a workers' government" was an attempt to reckon without the peasantry and was merely playing at the seizure of power. Therein lay the vast difference in the positions of Lenin and Trotsky in April 1917. In combating the Right opportunists and the capitulators, Lenin in April struck heavily and then continued to flay those among the ranks of the Bolsheviks (Bogdatyev, for instance) who were inclined towards "Left" outbursts, as expressed in premature proposals to overthrow the Provisional Government before the way had been prepared by winning over the broad masses of soldiers and peasants to the side of the Party.

Without this preliminary condition, to have issued the slogan of the overthrow of the Provisional Government would have been a piece of sheer adventurism.

\* Lenin, "Two Letters to A. M. Kollontai, I," *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, Book I.

The April Conference was of immense importance in the life of the Party. At this Conference the Party decisively smashed the opportunist elements and confirmed the policy of transforming the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution in alliance with the poor peasantry, the latter task being regarded as the fundamental task of the Party.

As Lenin subsequently wrote in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*:

"It turned out just as we had foretold. The course of the revolution confirmed the correctness of our arguments. At first together with 'all' the peasantry against the monarchy, against the landlords, against mediaevalism (and to that extent, the revolution remained bourgeois, bourgeois-democratic). Then, together with the poorest peasants, together with the semi-proletariat, together with all the exploited, against capitalism, including the rural rich, the kulaks and the speculators and to that extent the revolution becomes a socialist revolution. To attempt to raise an artificial Chinese Wall between the first and second revolutions, to separate them by anything else than the degree of preparedness of the proletariat and the degree of unity with the poor peasants, is to seriously distort Marxism, to vulgarise it, to substitute liberalism in its stead." <sup>†</sup>

And Stalin in his *Leninism* writes:

"In 1917 the chain of the imperialist world front turned out to be weaker in Russia than in the other countries. It was there that it was broken and afforded an outlet for the proletarian revolution. Why? Because in Russia a very great popular revolution was being developed, led by a revolutionary proletariat, which had such an important ally as the vast mass of the peasantry who were oppressed and exploited by the landlords, because the revolution found itself opposed by tsarism, the most hideous representative of imperialism, devoid of all moral authority and deservedly hated by the whole people. The chain proved to be weakest in Russia, although that country was less developed in a capitalistic sense than, for example, France, Germany, England or America." <sup>††</sup>

<sup>†</sup> Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. VII

<sup>††</sup> Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism," *Leninism*, Vol. I.



## CHAPTER X

### THE STRUGGLE FOR THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT— THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

*Winning the Petrograd proletariat—All-Russian Congress of Soviets—The events of July 3-5, 1917—The Sixth Party Congress—The "inter-regionalists" join the Party—Resolutions on the trade unions and the youth—The State Conference and the Kornilov revolt—Bolshevisation of the Soviets—The national policy of the Party—Mobilising the masses and preparations for revolt—The role of the Party and Central Committee in the insurrection—Strike-breaking and capitulation by the Rights—Specific features of the October Revolution—Foreign and domestic position of the Soviet government*

#### *Winning the Petrograd Proletariat*

The Conference of April 1917 marked a turning point in the history of the Party, expressed in the transition from the slogan of a democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry to the slogan of a socialist dictatorship of the working class and the poor peasantry. The decisions of the April Conference received the support of the overwhelming majority of the Party. The Party now came before the workers and soldiers with a platform openly advocating a Soviet government, and on the basis of this platform set about winning the support of the majority of the toiling masses. Particularly rapid progress in this respect was made in Petrograd, in which the flower of the working class and the brains of the Party itself were concentrated.

The vastly increased influence of the Party was revealed during the demonstration of April 20-21 which broke out spontaneously in protest against the policy of the Provisional Government, against the continuation of the war, and against Milyukov's notorious note undertaking to respect all the obligations assumed by Russia towards the Allies. The demonstration was held in spite of the injunctions of the conciliationist Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies; it was a protest against the government set up by the Petrograd Soviet. The workers demon-

strated under slogans advanced by the Party. It created the first serious crisis experienced by the Provisional Government, and the solution of the crisis by the formation of a coalition government served but as a new and powerful impulse for the workers and soldiers, at first of Petrograd, and then of the rest of Russia, to go over to the side of the Bolshevik Party. For the participation of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries in the government still more exposed their alliance with the bourgeoisie and their connivance at the counter-revolutionary policy of dragging out the war and obstructing the settlement of the fundamental questions of the revolution.

The Petrograd workers would not have passed so rapidly to the side of the Bolsheviks had the soil not been prepared by the persistent activities of the Party during the first revolution and during 1912-14, the period of the existence of *Pravda*. The work performed by the Party in extending the circulation of *Pravda* and in taking the fullest possible advantage of legal opportunities during the period of 1912-14, work which was best organised and most energetically carried on in Petrograd, contributed to the rapid Bolshevisation of the Petrograd proletariat in 1917. An important factor also was the work performed by the Party during the world imperialist war and the period of February-March 1917. At a conference of factory and workshop committees of Petrograd held towards the end of May, three-quarters of the delegates voted for the Bolshevik resolution demanding workers' control of industry. The demand for workers' control of industry was advanced by the Party at the April Conference, during a revolutionary situation, and naturally followed from the prevailing state of economic disorganisation, and from the attempts of the bourgeoisie to aggravate this state of disorganisation in order to force the working class by hunger to come to heel. The demand gained immediate and widespread popularity.

#### *All-Russian Congress of Soviets*

A few days after the conference of factory and workshop committees, the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets was held. Of its eight to nine hundred delegates only a little over one hundred were Bolsheviks. Yet, although the Bolsheviks were in a minority,

the atmosphere of the Congress was impregnated with Bolshevik ideas. When, under the pressure of the Petrograd workers, the Congress organised the demonstration of June 18, intending it to be a manifestation in support of the coalition government, the demonstration assumed a predominantly Bolshevik character. The great majority of the workers and of the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison demonstrated with banners demanding the retirement of the capitalist ministers, the transfer of the power of government to the Soviets, a democratic peace to be concluded by the Soviets, workers' control of industry, and so forth. Nevertheless, the demonstration of June 18 did not prevent the Provisional Government, under the dictation of the Russian bourgeoisie and the Allied missions, and with the approval of the Menshevik and S.R. majority of the All-Russian Congress, from giving orders for an advance on the war front. In view of the obvious unwillingness to fight on the part of the army, this could not but lead, and in fact did lead, to the most disastrous consequences: tremendous losses, complete disorganisation of the army and the surrender of vast territory to the German imperialists.

At the First Congress of Soviets the Party determinedly demanded that the Congress of Soviets itself should immediately assume the power of government.

This was a brilliant example of the application of united front tactics and won for the Party the profound sympathy of the workers and soldiers. In spite of the fact that the Soviets were Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary and did not share the platform of the Bolsheviks, the Party put before the masses the slogan of a Soviet government, in order to create a government that would be answerable and responsible to the working class and the revolutionary army, and not to the bourgeoisie. The Bolshevik Party called upon the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s to assume power because they still enjoyed the confidence of the masses. This placed the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in a quandary. What could they do? To assume power in the name of the Soviets would mean surrendering it to the Bolsheviks within a month, since the influence of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets was growing from day to day. Not to assume power would mean completely exposing themselves in the eyes of the masses.

*The Events of July 3-5, 1917*

A yet more striking proof of the success of the Party in mobilising the masses in support of the demand for the peaceful transfer of the power of government to the Soviets was furnished by the events of July 3-5. The workers and soldiers of Petrograd called upon the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary Central Executive Committee of the Soviets to assume power. The fact that the Central Executive Committee refused to assume power, and instead invoked counter-revolutionary forces to attack the peacefully demonstrating masses, completely and finally discredited the policy of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries.

The events of July 3-5 profoundly modified the existing situation. The Party formerly had demanded that the Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary Soviets should assume power and had called upon the masses to re-elect the Soviets and replace the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionary deputies by Bolshevik deputies. The Party had not summoned the masses to violent action, but recommended them to be in fighting readiness against the event that the counter-revolutionaries attempted to hinder the peaceful transfer of power to the Soviets (which undoubtedly would take place). But now the actual power was in the possession of counter-revolutionary forces, which had organised themselves under the protection of the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaders of the Soviets. The period of dual power had come to an end. The coalition government, consisting overwhelmingly of Constitutional Democrats (Cadets) and social-compromisers, proceeded to strengthen its power in the country, basing itself on the organised forces of counter-revolution. The Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary Soviets came completely under the influence of the counter-revolutionary cliques that stood at the back of the bourgeois section of the Provisional Government. The Bolshevik Party was now faced with the problem of violently overthrowing these counter-revolutionary cliques together with the bourgeois government which with their aid had become the real power in the country.

"The movement on July 3-5 was the last attempt to induce the Soviets, by way of demonstrations, to take power. From that moment on, the Soviets, *i.e.*, the S.R.'s and Mensheviks in control of them, virtually handed over power to the counter-revolution, represented by

the Cadets and supported by the S.R.'s and Mensheviks. A peaceful development of the Russian Revolution has now become impossible. History puts the question thus: either complete victory for the counter-revolution, or a new revolution."†

The July events were followed by mass arrests of the Bolsheviks. A savage campaign was launched against Lenin, who was obliged to go into hiding in order to evade arrest and trial at the instigation of the Provisional Government. There is not the slightest doubt that had Lenin not avoided trial, he would have been subjected to the fate subsequently suffered by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Certain comrades were of the opinion that Lenin should surrender himself to the bourgeois court, but the majority of the Central Committee, headed by Stalin and Sverdlov, vigorously opposed any such step, for it would mean that Lenin would be surrendering himself to the tender mercies of the savage hangmen of counter-revolution. Kamenev and Kollontai were arrested, as well as Trotsky and Lunacharsky, who had not yet joined the Party. The *Pravda* offices were wrecked by military cadets (*Junkers*). The Bolshevik organisations in the army were subjected to severe repression and the death penalty was introduced at the front.

It was at this moment, when counter-revolution had assumed the active offensive, and when the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary Soviets were, as Lenin aptly expressed it, like sheep being led to the slaughter, that Lenin called upon the Party to change its tactics towards the Soviets. It was now impossible to demand the transfer of power to the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary Soviets, for they had assumed the role of active supporters of counter-revolution and hangmen of the worker and soldier masses.\*\*

Lenin proposed that the slogan "Power to the Soviets" should be replaced by the demand for the overthrow of the bourgeois counter-revolutionary dictatorship and its replacement by a dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasants. Lenin's proposal was adopted by the Central Committee.

\* Lenin, "An Answer," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXI, Book I

\*\* Even Martov, publicly and to their faces, referred to Tsereteli and Lieber, the leaders of the defencist Menshevik Socialist-Revolutionary bloc, as Versaillesists, i.e., the hangmen of the Paris Commune.

*The Sixth Party Congress*

This change of slogans was definitely ratified by the Sixth Party Congress, which was held semi-legally in Petrograd in the early part of August 1917. One hundred and eighty-seven delegates with the right to vote and one hundred and seven delegates without the right to vote attended the Congress. These figures are eloquent of the growth of the Party in the brief interval that had elapsed since the April Conference.

Lenin was not present at the Congress. A number of other members of the Central Committee were also absent owing to arrest, or because they were obliged to remain in concealment. The Central Committee had been considerably reduced in numbers, but it contained members like Stalin and Sverdlov who continued the firm leadership of the Party along the lines laid down by Lenin.

The Congress confirmed the necessity of waging decisive war for the overthrow of the counter-revolutionary dictatorship. It recorded the opinion that the only way for the international proletariat to secure a genuine democratic conclusion of the war was for it to win power, while in Russia the power must be seized by the workers and poor peasants. The Congress declared that the seizure of power in Russia might take place prior to the socialist revolutions in the advanced countries, but that this fact must not deter the dictatorship of the workers and poor peasants in Russia from undertaking socialist reforms.

Preobrazhensky proposed an amendment to the resolution of the Sixth Congress on the current situation in which he advised that the seizure of power should be undertaken

"... for the purpose of directing it [the country] towards peace and, in the event of a proletarian revolution in the West, towards socialism."

This amendment shows that in August 1917 Preobrazhensky could not imagine socialist construction being undertaken in Russia until the proletarian revolution had triumphed in the West.

Stalin opposed Preobrazhensky's amendment with the following brief rejoinder.

"I am against such a conclusion to the resolution. The possibility is not excluded that *Russia may be the very country which will pave the way to socialism* [My italics—N.P.]. Up to now no country has tried to adopt workers' control of industry. Besides that, the basis of our rev-

olution is broader than in Western Europe, where the proletariat stands face to face with the bourgeoisie in complete isolation. Here the workers are supported by the poorest sections of the peasantry. Finally, in Germany the apparatus of state power works incomparably better than the imperfect apparatus of our bourgeoisie, which itself is tributary to European capital. We must reject the outworn conception that only Europe can show us the way. There is dogmatic Marxism and creative Marxism, I am on the side of the latter." <sup>5</sup>

The Congress rejected Preobrazhensky's amendment.

The Sixth Congress laid emphasis on the fact that the power in Russia was in the hands of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. The resolution states:

"It is this imperialist dictatorship that has done, and is doing, everything . . . to destroy political freedom, committing acts of violence against the masses, and ruthlessly persecuting the internationally-minded proletariat, while the central organ of the Soviets, the Central Executive Committee, is utterly impotent and inactive.

"The Soviets are undergoing painful agonies, they are disintegrating, owing to the fact that they did not in good time take the whole power of government into their hands.

"The demand for the transfer of power to the Soviets, advanced with the first upsurge of the revolution and propagated by our Party, was a demand which presumed the possibility of a peaceful development of the revolution, of the painless transfer of power from the bourgeoisie to the workers and peasants, and the possibility that the petty bourgeoisie would gradually outlive their illusions.

"Now, however, peaceful development, and the painless transfer of power to the Soviets has become impossible, since the power has in fact passed into the hands of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

"The only correct slogan at the present moment is the demand for the complete liquidation of the dictatorship of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. The revolutionary proletariat alone, provided it is supported by the poor peasants, is capable of fulfilling that task, the task of the new upsurge."

Only a few of the delegates at the Sixth Congress advocated retaining the demand that the Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary Soviets should assume power, thereby giving expression to the Right opportunist tendencies within the Party which favoured compromise with the Mensheviks. "Leftist" tendencies were also expressed, particularly by Bukharin. Bukharin considered that the military dictatorship in France and England was similar to the military dictatorship in Russia, an obviously over-simplified view of the situation. Bukharin was of the opinion that the peas-

ants, being small property-owners, would naturally support the defencists. Such a point of view would have rendered useless the campaign carried on by the Party to enlighten the soldiers and peasants as to the nature of defencism.

Bukharin also advanced a totally incorrect and mechanistic theory of the two phases of the revolution:

“the first phase, with the participation of the peasantry anxious to obtain land, the second phase, after the satiated peasantry has fallen away, the phase of the proletarian revolution, when the Russian proletariat will be supported only by proletarian elements and by the proletariat of Western Europe”

This theory was vigorously rejected by Stalin.

The fact that the Sixth Congress had definitely adopted the policy of overthrowing the counter-revolutionary government did not prevent it from discussing at great length the question of the elections to the Constituent Assembly and of the use that could be made of the elections. Sufferers from the “infantile disorder of Leftism” failed entirely to conceive how the Russian Party could combine revolutionary tactics with the use of bourgeois parliamentarism. But in the years 1912-14 the Bolshevik Party had already given an example of how parliamentarism could be used for revolutionary purposes. So now, although preparing for the armed uprising, in the summer of 1917, the Party at the Sixth Congress did not reject the use of parliamentarism in every possible form, the use of the elections to the Constituent Assembly, with the object of increasing its influence among the masses and with a view to seizing power.

### *The “Inter-Regionalists” Join the Party*

On the eve of the Sixth Congress the Trotskyist organisation, known as the “inter-regionalists,” joined the Party. After the February Revolution, Mensheviks of all shades started a noisy campaign in favour of what they called a united party. They reckoned that within a united party they could crush the Bolsheviks, deprive them of both ideological and organisational independence and compel them to work in the interests of the bourgeoisie. The Party vigorously opposed the speculations of the defencists on a united party, the appeal for which they addressed to the unenlightened sections of the workers who were still not in



a position to understand the irreconcilable differences that divided the Bolsheviks and the defencists.

One must recall the line pursued by the Party on this question before the war. In the bitter struggle waged at that period, the Party adopted a clear and definite attitude, namely, to unite all members of the Party who had dissociated themselves from the liquidators. But by union they meant that all real Party members should join the already existing Bolshevik Party. The Party opposed dishonest speculation on a union of groups of leaders, who, like Trotsky, lived abroad and were completely isolated from Russia. It proposed unity from below, *i.e.*, the union of the illegal nuclei within the ranks of the existing Bolshevik Party.

The policy of the Party during the period of the war was to unite within the existing Bolshevik Party all consistent internationalists, all who favoured a rupture with the conciliationist Second International, all who favoured an organisational break with the defencists within Russia.

When the organisations emerged from underground and large numbers of politically inexperienced workers flocked to their ranks, and when the old Party intelligentsia, who had taken no part in the struggle against the liquidators and the defencists in the interval between the two revolutions, began to return to Russia, the demand for a "united party," for the union of the Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks, of the defencists with the internationalists, frequently met with sympathetic response even from the rank and file. United Social-Democratic organisations had existed in Odessa, Nikolayev, Minsk, in certain parts of the Donets Basin, in Tula, Bryansk and in certain Siberian cities. Some of them continued to exist down to the July events. There were independent Bolshevik organisations in every large industrial centre. The raw masses who had recently joined the organisations, while they sympathised with the political line of the Party, were at first not always able to understand the "schismatic" policy of the Bolsheviks, and at times allowed themselves to be fooled by the demagogic appeals of the Mensheviks for "Party unity." In spite of all this, the Central Committee and the overwhelming majority of the Party organisations resolutely maintained their former position, permitting unity (by which was implied membership in the existing Bolshevik Party) only with consistent internationalists who had broken with the defencists.

Such was the spirit of the resolution adopted by the April Conference. It re-affirmed the standpoint held by the Party prior to the Conference, particularly in the period of February and March before Lenin's arrival from abroad.

The group residing abroad which was headed by Trotsky had since the outbreak of the war maintained a Kautskyist Centrist position; it was only gradually that they came to favour a break with the defencists. Their views were shared by a group in Petrograd known as the "Organisation of Inter-Regionalists" formed in 1914. This organisation, having been reinforced by large numbers of returned emigrants, developed fairly widespread activities. In May and June 1917 it established a fairly close alliance with the Bolshevik Party. In contradistinction to the Menshevik internationalists, the inter-regionalists favoured a break with the defencists. We know how vigorously Lenin opposed union with the Trotskyists at the beginning of the February Revolution, when the latter still maintained a conciliatory attitude towards the defencists. The Trotskyists now abandoned this attitude. Following the example of the Bolsheviks, they adopted a programme demanding the assumption of power by the Soviets, the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war, the immediate proposal by a Soviet government of peace without annexations and without reparations, and the right of self-determination for all peoples. Profound differences still remained between Trotsky and the Party on the subject of the possibility of achieving socialism in one single country. Trotsky continued to maintain the theory of permanent revolution, which implied a disbelief in the ability of the proletariat to lead the peasantry.

In his pamphlet *A Programme of Peace*, published in the spring of 1917, Trotsky declared. "It would be hopeless to think that revolutionary Russia could hold out against counter-revolutionary Europe." Finally, Trotsky could not understand the Bolshevik principles of organisation, Bolshevik discipline and the Bolshevik doctrine of a new type of party, distinct from the parties of the Second International.

But in the summer of 1917 Trotsky did not particularly emphasise his differences with the Bolsheviks; he had put them away in his safe for the time being, as Stalin says. This circumstance made it possible for the Trotskyists to join the Bolshevik Party. The Bolsheviks did not oppose their joining, and even urged the

inter-regionalists to hasten it. But fits of Menshevism suffered by the inter-regionalists prevented them joining the Party. A striking example of such backslidings to Menshevism is the article written by Trotsky for the organ of the inter-regionalists, *Vperyod*, in which he declared that the "organisational conservatism" of the Bolsheviks hindered union. This was characteristic of Trotsky, who never shared the organisational principles of the Bolsheviks.

At the First Congress of Soviets, the Bolshevik and the inter-regionalist fractions on the whole acted in harmony; but the latter did not always support the Bolsheviks. When the leaders of the Congress accused the Bolsheviks of conspiracy, consisting in allegedly secret preparations for a demonstration on June 10, and the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries raged and stormed at the Bolsheviks, the inter-regionalist fraction not only did not support the Bolsheviks, but dissociated itself from them. Although they worked in contact with the Bolsheviks, the inter-regionalists at times experienced strong sympathy for the Menshevik internationalists.\* At the First Congress of Soviets, Trotsky cried, "Long live the honest revolutionary, Martov!" He declared that it would be ideal to form a ministry of twelve Peshekhonovs. It was not until after the events of July 3-5 that the inter-regionalists finally decided to join the Bolshevik Party.

Among the inter-regionalists who joined the Party at that time were Trotsky, Lunacharsky, Uritsky, Yurenev,\*\* Joffe, Karakhan and M. K. Vladimirov.\*\*\* Some of those who joined continued to maintain factional contacts with Trotsky, who upon joining the Party immediately began to recruit factional supporters. In this he did not confine himself to the inter-regionalists, the majority of whom had originally belonged to the Mensheviks or the *Vperyod* group.

Greetings on behalf of the group of Menshevik internationalists were extended to the Sixth Congress by Larin, who somewhat later

\* At a conference of the inter-regionalists held in May at which Lenin was present and spoke, a proposal for immediate union with the Bolsheviks was rejected.

\*\* Yurenev at the time of the Sixth Party Congress had declared. "We believe that the moment is not far off when the Mensheviks will cease to be scared of the bugbear of Bolshevism and will join us under the banner of the International."

\*\*\* Volodarsky had joined the Party independently, somewhat earlier.

left the Menshevik Party and joined the Bolsheviks. The Menshevik internationalists sent a message to the Sixth Congress signed by Martov and Astrov, in which they expressed their profound sympathy with the Bolshevik Party in its persecution by the Provisional Government, but recommended the Party not to go to extremes in its opposition to the majority of revolutionary democrats, in other words, to the defencists. Such an attitude of course made closer contact between the Bolsheviks and the Menshevik internationalists impossible.

Bukharin, replying to the greetings of the Menshevik internationalists on behalf of the Congress, declared that the doors of the Party were open to all who did not hesitate to sever themselves from the defencists. But that is just what the leaders of the Menshevik internationalists could not and would not do. They preferred to remain in one party with defencists whom they themselves had called *Versaillists*, thus once more revealing the true value of their internationalism.

The Sixth Congress categorically reaffirmed the policy of permitting only such internationalists to enter the Party as had definitely broken with the defencists.

### *Resolutions on the Trade Unions and the Youth*

Particularly important was the resolution adopted by the Sixth Congress defining the policy of the Party towards the trade union movement. At the Fourth and Fifth Congresses there had been acute dissensions between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks over this question. The Mensheviks shared the view of the German Social-Democrats that the trade union movement must be neutral. They "protected" the trade unions from Party control and from "petty Party tutelage" with a fervour befitting bourgeois agents within the ranks of the Party. At the London Congress the Bolsheviks definitely rejected the principle of neutrality of trade unions and adopted the principle that the trade unions must bear a Party character. This was intended not in the vulgarised sense in which it was understood by the Polish Social-Democrats, who considered that only Party members should be accepted into the trade unions and that every trade union must bear a Party label. What the Bolsheviks meant was that the ideological guid-

ance of the Party should be exercised in the trade unions, which were formally non-Party organisations, by means of Party fractions within the trade unions.

The Sixth Congress adopted a resolution condemning the Menshevik theory of neutrality, which, it declared, would not protect the trade unions from politics (the Mensheviks asserted that the masses would be scared away from the trade unions by politics), but would only make them an instrument of the politics of the bourgeoisie. In order that the trade unions might become organs of working class politics, they must accept the ideological guidance of the revolutionary proletarian party.

The Sixth Congress also adopted an important resolution on the Youth Leagues. Youth Leagues first appeared as independent organisations after the February Revolution. In many places they still had no settled political views, wavering between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The Bolshevik Party now called attention to the immense importance of the Youth Leagues as a potential Party reserve. The resolution of the Sixth Congress emphasised the necessity of gaining control of these organisations, a task which was rapidly and effectively accomplished.

The Sixth Congress expressed its complete approval of Lenin's decision not to appear for trial and vigorously condemned the campaign raised against Lenin in the bourgeois and opportunist press.

The main purpose of the Sixth Congress was to mobilise the forces of the Party against temporarily triumphant counter-revolution, which after the July events subjected the Party to vicious police persecution. This persecution failed to accomplish its purpose of compelling the Party to abandon its fundamental principles and policy. On the contrary, it only served still more to consolidate the forces of the Party and prepare them for the decisive battle it was to offer the counter-revolution in October.\*

The Sixth Congress was an important event in the life of the Party. It vigorously condemned the confusion and vacillation dis-

\* The Central Committee appointed by the Sixth Congress consisted of Lenin, Stalin, Kamenev, Trotsky, Sverdlov, Zinoviev, Nogin, Rykov, Bukharin, Uritsky, Milyutin, Kollontai, Artem (Sergeyev), Krestinsky, Dzerzhinsky, Joffe, Sokolnikov, Smilga, Bubnov, Muralov, Shaumyan and Berzin. Among the alternate members were Lomov and Stasova.

played by certain sections of the Party\* after the July defeat and gave clear directives to the Party on the tasks that faced it. As Stalin at the Congress declared:

"The peaceful period of the revolution has come to an end, a period has begun which is not peaceful, a period of collisions and upheavals"

After the Sixth Congress, the Party, which had for some time been compelled to defend itself against the blows of counter-revolution, proceeded to a counter-offensive.

### *The State Conference and the Kornilov Revolt*

The counter-offensive began with an attack undertaken by the Party against what was known as the Moscow State Conference, held in August 1917, and arranged by Kerensky. To it were invited the representatives of "revolutionary democracy," in the person of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, propertied interests, represented by the Cadets, generals led by Kornilov and Kaledin, industrialists, etc. A symbol of the Moscow Conference was the touching handshake exchanged between the leader of Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary "revolutionary democracy," Tsereteli, and the leader of the bourgeoisie, Bublikov. The Moscow Conference, however, found itself obliged to forego the benefit of electric light, and its representatives had to return to their homes on foot, owing to the fact that a general strike had been declared in protest against the Moscow Conference, in which literally the whole proletariat of Moscow participated. The strike was called by the Trade Union Council, which was now in the hands of the Bolsheviks. The strike was a grave warning to the counter-revolution of the growing proletarian revolution, a warning which, however, failed to sober the counter-revolutionaries. Behind the scenes of the Moscow Conference an agreement was reached between the leaders of the counter-revolutionary cliques, and plans were laid for the seizure of power by Kornilov, plans to which the representatives of the Provisional

\* As an example may be cited Kamenev's speech at a meeting of the Central Executive Committee, in which, without consent of the Party fraction and the C C, he advocated participation in the Stockholm Conference of the social-patriots. It should be mentioned that the paper *Novaya Zhizn* also strongly recommended participation in the conference. Kamenev's proposal was vigorously condemned by Lenin.

Government were privy. The Kornilov revolt, however, ended in failure. The conspirators were vigorously repulsed by the worker and soldier masses organised by the Bolsheviks, who had already become the most powerful party in the country. The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries proved unprepared psychologically and politically to resist the *coup de main*. It was the masses who compelled them to act. The Kornilov attempt ended in complete failure. The importance of this failure lay not in the fact that Kornilov was replaced in the post of commander-in-chief by General Alexeyev (the future organiser of the White Army), who was no less counter-revolutionary than Kornilov himself, but in the fact that in organising the resistance to the Kornilov attempt, the Bolsheviks were enabled still further to strengthen their forces and increase their influence among the masses.

The tactics pursued by the Party at the time of the Kornilov attempt were laid down and carried out by Lenin (although he was in concealment) in complete unity with the members of the C.C. who were directly guiding the activities of the Party (Stalin, Sverdlov, etc.). They were a model of brilliant manoeuvring and flexibility calculated to produce the maximum political effect.

"It is my conviction," Lenin wrote to the C.C., "that those who have sunk . . . to defencism or . . . to a *bloc* with the Socialist-Revolutionaries and to *supporting* the Provisional Government, are guilty of lack of principle. . . .

"And *even now* we must not support Kerensky's government. That would be lack of principle. It will be asked: What, not even fight Kornilov? Of course, fight him! But that is not the same thing, there is a dividing line, a line which is being overstepped by certain Bolsheviks, who allow themselves to become 'conciliationists' and to be carried away by the flood of events.

"We will fight, we are fighting Kornilov, just as Kerensky's troops are. But we do not support Kerensky; on the contrary, we expose his weakness. That is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference, but a superimportant one and must not be forgotten.

"What change, then, is necessitated in our tactics by Kornilov's revolt?

"We must change the *form* of our struggle against Kerensky. While not relaxing our hostility towards him one iota, while not withdrawing a single one of the words we uttered against him, while not renouncing the task of overthrowing Kerensky, we say: we must reckon with the present state of affairs; we shall not overthrow Kerensky just now; we shall adopt a different method of fighting him, namely, we shall point out to the people (who are fighting Kornilov) the *weakness* and *vacilla-*

tion of Kerensky. That was done before. But now it has become the main thing. That is the change.

"The change, furthermore, consists in this, that the main thing now is to intensify our agitation in favour of what might be called 'partial demands' to be addressed to Kerensky, namely: arrest Milyukov; arm the Petrograd workers; summon the Kronstadt, Vyborg and Helsingfors troops to Petrograd, disperse the State Duma; arrest Rodzyanko; legalise the transfer of the landlords' estates to the peasants, introduce workers' control over bread and over the factories, etc., etc. These demands must be addressed not only to Kerensky, and not so much to Kerensky, as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been carried away by enthusiasm in the struggle against Kornilov. Further their enthusiasm, encourage them to beat up the generals and officers who favour supporting Kornilov; urge them to demand the immediate transfer of the land to the peasants, suggest to them the necessity of arresting Rodzyanko and Milyukov, of dispersing the State Duma, of shutting down the *Ryech* and the other bourgeois papers, and of instituting proceedings against them. The 'Left' Socialist-Revolutionaries particularly must be pushed in this direction.

"It would be wrong to think that we have departed further from the task of the conquest of power by the proletariat. Not at all. We have approached much nearer to it, only not directly but by a side path. And at this very minute we must conduct our agitation against Kerensky, not so much directly as indirectly, that is, by demanding a most active, energetic and truly revolutionary fight against Kornilov."\*

Under the slogan of fighting Kornilov, the Party proceeded to organise the arming of the workers. The real foundations of a Red Guard were laid during the Kornilov Days. After the July events, the Provisional Government had succeeded in partially disarming the Petrograd proletariat, but during the Kornilov Days it was unable to prevent the proletariat rearming, and this time much more thoroughly. Furthermore, the Kornilov attempt finally exposed in the eyes of even the most backward masses the true counter-revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie and the fact that they had the support of the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s. In the struggle against Kornilov, and under the pressure exercised by the masses from below, the Menshevik-S.R. Soviets were again obliged to assume what were in fact functions of government, namely, to secure the support of the armed forces, to arm the workers, etc. The counter-revolutionary Bonapartist cliques, who had in fact seized power after the events of July 3-5,

\* Lenin, "To the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party," *Selected Works*, Vol VI.



now proved impotent and isolated. The Menshevik-S.R. Soviets once more had the opportunity to take over the government and to eject from the coalition government the representatives of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

Lenin with amazing rapidity grasped the essence of the new political situation and in an article entitled *On Compromises* called upon the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s to break with the Cadets at least now that the connection between the Cadets and the Kornilov counter-revolution had been completely exposed.

"The compromise," he wrote, "is, on our part, a return to the pre-July demand: all power to the Soviets and a government of Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks answerable to the Soviets."\*

Only one thing was demanded of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, namely, to break with the Cadet counter-revolutionary conspirators and to transfer the power to the Soviets; in fact to take the power into their own hands. As we know, after considerable vacillation, the Menshevik-S.R. Soviets refused to adopt the proposed compromise, realising that in view of the rising tide of revolution a Menshevik-S.R. government would not last very long. They once more handed over the power to the coalition government of Kerensky (who had been conducting suspicious negotiations with Kornilov on the very eve of his revolt) together with the Cadets, fellow-conspirators of Kornilov.

Thus, the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s once again betrayed themselves as supporters of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, which made it easier for the Bolsheviks to continue mobilising the masses around the demand for a Soviet government and against the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government.

True, the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s did not decide on this new act of treachery immediately. A Democratic Conference was summoned by the leaders, at which skilful wire-pulling by Lieber and Dan guaranteed a majority for the conciliationist parties. The Conference sweated for two weeks over the question as to what kind of government should be created. A series of resolutions were adopted, one contradicting the other. A decision was taken to form a coalition government, but an amendment was immediately adopted to exclude the Cadets from this government, which deprived the coalition of all meaning (the bourgeoisie did not

\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. VI.

trust any other party, whereas the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s could not imagine a government the leadership of which was not in the hands of the representatives of the bourgeoisie). Hence, after the Democratic Conference had decided to form a coalition government, and decided against coalition with the Cadets, and after the delegates to the Conference had already dispersed, the Menshevik and S.R. members of the government once again formed a coalition government with the Cadets.

The Democratic Conference created the notorious Pre-Parliament, a peculiar kind of talk-shop similar to the still-born Bulygin Duma. The Pre-Parliament enjoyed no legislative functions and was merely a deliberative body. Having created this Pre-Parliament in conjunction with the representatives of the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s hoped to talk over the masses, a hope which proves that on the eve of the October Revolution they had completely lost all sense of political reality. The Bolshevik Party declared a boycott of the Pre-Parliament, although certain members, headed by Kamenev and Nogin, advocated participation in this useless talk-shop, against which Lenin and Stalin protested in the most vigorous fashion.

Participation in the Pre-Parliament was tantamount to rejecting insurrection. The boycott of the Pre-Parliament implied a policy of insurrection and the transfer of power to the Soviets.

### *Bolshevisation of the Soviets*

Following the Kornilov revolt, when Kornilov himself had not yet been arrested, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies adopted what was the first Bolshevik resolution in the whole of its history. Almost every point of this resolution began with the word *immediate* to put an immediate end to the war; to put an immediate stop to the sabotage of the industrialists; the immediate establishment of workers' control; the immediate transfer of the estates of the landlords to the peasants, etc. Hitherto, the working class had been fed on the word *tomorrow*; the compromisers had promised that all questions would be solved by the Constituent Assembly, while the summoning of the Constituent Assembly was being constantly postponed. The workers were tired of waiting. The tactics of the capitalists were to sabotage production, in order to starve the workers into submission. The

endeavours of the workers, in view of the frightful rise in the cost of living, to secure an increase of wages, however slight, met with determined rebuff. The counter-revolutionary industrial bourgeoisie, benevolently supported by the Provisional Government, had decided to starve the workers out. The workers, losing hope in the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, now began to rally solidly around the demand of the Bolsheviks for the transfer of power to the Soviets and for the establishment of control over industry. At the beginning of the summer of 1917, the Petrograd workers had lined up with the Bolsheviks; by the end of the summer the example of Petrograd was followed by the industrial centres of Moscow, the Donets Basin, the Ukraine, the Volga provinces and the Urals. The Bolsheviks now had the overwhelming majority of the workers of the country on their side.

Following the Petrograd Soviet, the Soviets in Moscow and a number of the provincial cities also came under the control of the Bolsheviks. The demand for peace gained the support of the soldiers, while the demand for the transfer of the landlords' estates to the peasants won the support of the poor peasantry. But the latter demand had the sympathy not only of the poor peasants. The fact that the large estates had been left intact and the solution of the land question had been delayed until the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, the summoning of which was being continually postponed, served to steadily revolutionise the peasant masses as a whole. The Peasants' Soviets gradually slipped from the control of the Right S.R.'s. More than half the representatives from the Peasants' Soviets at the Democratic Conference voted against a coalition government. Instances of "arbitrary" seizure of estates became more and more frequent, until at last, in September, a number of the central provinces (particularly the gubernias of Penza and Tambov), and certain of the provinces in the vicinity of the war front became the arena of wholesale peasant uprisings.

The demand for the immediate seizure of the landlords' estates, the demand with which the Bolshevik Party was marching to power, was now guaranteed the support of the peasant masses. The spread of the revolutionary spirit among the peasantry was strikingly illustrated by the disintegration of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, which at the outbreak of the revolution had enjoyed the support of the majority of the peasants and the army.

The disintegration of the S.R. Party was manifested principally in two ways. Firstly, the withdrawal of the support of the masses, particularly of the soldiers, with whom the Bolsheviks were forming ever closer contacts. These masses went directly over from the S.R.'s to the Bolsheviks. Secondly, the rapid formation within the S.R. Party of a Left wing which vacillated between the policy of the majority of their own party, which was controlled by the defencists, and a policy of supporting the Bolsheviks.

As the revolution developed and spread to the soldier and peasant masses, the Left S.R.'s began definitely to incline towards the Bolshevik demands, *viz.*, the transfer of power to the Soviets, the immediate seizure of the landlords' estates by the peasants and the adoption of immediate and determined measures for the conclusion of peace. As a result of the support given by the Left S.R.'s to the Bolshevik demands, demands which answered the interests of the mass of the peasants, the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies in a number of the provinces began to come under the control of the Left S.R.'s. The situation now differed entirely from what it had been after the July demonstration, when the Party temporarily withdrew the demand for the transfer of power to the Soviets, owing to the fact that the Soviets had capitulated to the counter-revolution. Now that the Soviets were becoming revolutionised, the slogan of the assumption of power by Bolshevik Soviets was realisable, although only by *revolutionary* means. The counter-revolution would not tolerate the peaceful transfer of power to Bolshevik Soviets.

After the defeat of Kornilov, *i.e.*, from the end of August 1917, the Party began to gain the wide support of the working class and the poor peasantry in favour of the demand for the transfer of power to the Soviets, the landlords' estates to the peasants and for workers' control over production. The slogan of all power to the Soviets assumed a new class significance, namely, the direct establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat by means of an armed uprising. The Party closely associated the demand for peace with the demand for the transfer of power to the Soviets since only a Soviet government could guarantee peace. The demand for the immediate seizure of the landlords' estates by Revolutionary Peasants' Committees had the sympathy and support of the peasant masses.

*The National Policy of the Party*

At the same time, thanks to its consistent national policy, its advocacy of the right of Finland, the Ukraine and of the other territories inhabited by oppressed nationalities, to self-determination, including secession—the Party was not only attracting the toiling masses of those nationalities to its side, but was also depriving the Provisional Government of the support even of their bourgeois elements, causing dissension in the camp of the bourgeoisie and preventing the latter from undertaking united and organised action against the proletarian revolution.

The Central Ukrainian Rada, which within a few months was to engage in warfare against the Bolsheviks, and which even then was exerting every effort to prevent the establishment of the Soviet power in the Ukraine, in August participated in the boycott of the Moscow Conference. The Ukrainian Mensheviks and S.R.'s did not act in complete harmony with the Russian Mensheviks and S.R.'s; they feared the latter's chauvinist fangs; they also feared the Russian bourgeoisie, whose policy the Provisional Government was carrying out. Under the pressure of the masses (who sympathised with the Bolsheviks for their opposition to national oppression of any kind and for their support in practice of the right of nations to self-determination) these gentlemen at times were even prepared to pose as the allies of the Bolsheviks.

The Polish Socialist Party organisation (Pilsudski's) in Moscow, where many Polish refugees were residing at that time, called upon its followers to vote for the Bolsheviks in the elections to the Moscow borough councils held in September 1917, in spite of profound differences of principle. It did so because the Bolshevik Party was the only party which in practice opposed the policy of national oppression pursued by the Provisional Government with the support of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, because it advocated the right of nations to self-determination including secession, and because it actively supported the nations oppressed by the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie in their struggle for self-determination.

*Mobilising the Masses and Preparations for Revolt*

It was now a question of mobilising all forces against the Provisional Government. The capable way in which this mobilisation was effected, under slogans and demands which appealed most strongly to the masses, is due to the brilliant leadership of Lenin. These slogans were peace, workers' control over production, the immediate seizure of the landlords' estates by the peasants, and the right of the nations inhabiting Russia to self-determination including secession. These slogans helped to rally the forces with which the Party was to win its triumph in October. But Lenin's genius was displayed not only in the selection of slogans; it also revealed itself in the brilliant combination of political and technical factors during the preparations for insurrection.

The Mensheviks in 1905 were fond of declaring that one had only to arm the brains of the workers, their hands would find their own weapons. They pictured insurrection as a spontaneous and uncontrolled process. This was tantamount to rejecting insurrection entirely.

The Bolshevik Party, on the other hand, had always regarded insurrection as an art. Lenin insisted in articles and letters he wrote in 1905 that insurrection required thorough and comprehensive technical preparation. He called for the organisation of fighting squads and gave precise recommendations as to the composition and aims of these squads, how to arm them, how they should be commanded and the role they were to play in the uprising of the masses. The Moscow armed insurrection of 1905 was organised by the Bolshevik Party. In the revolution of 1917, particularly during the Kornilov Days, the Party managed to arm large numbers of workers and to provide them with military training. Lenin drew up a detailed plan for the October armed insurrection. The experience of the Revolution of 1905 was made full use of by the Party. The intellectual mobilisation of the toilers was accompanied by the technical preparation of the necessary forces of workers and soldiers for the armed struggle, the creation of a Red Guard and of a military organisation. Naturally, the most skilful and carefully planned preparations for armed rebellion would have been vain, had they not been made in an electrified political atmosphere at a time when the whole course

of events was shaping for a decisive collision between revolution and counter-revolution.

Led by Lenin, the Party with extreme skill brought the masses to understand that a counter-revolutionary offensive would be fatal to their interests if not forestalled by a timely counter-offensive on the part of the proletariat. The Party succeeded in convincing the masses of the need for a preventative attack. The Party moved steadily forward, gaining one political position after another. At the same time it was able to explain to the masses that the advance was necessary as a defence against counter-revolution, and that, in order to forestall counter-revolution, active measures of defence were essential. This was a valuable political education for the masses; the assumption of the offensive by the counter-revolution would indeed have been fraught with dire consequences for them. The Party defended itself by attacking.

Why was a Military Revolutionary Committee created in Petrograd? Because it was necessary to defend the capital not only from within, from the counter-revolutionaries, but also from without; for the counter-revolutionary generals and government ministers were not averse to surrendering Petrograd to the Germans. The measures taken by the Military Revolutionary Committee were designed for the defence of the revolution. Preparations for insurrection were made under the plea of protecting the Congress of Soviets, which the counter-revolutionaries were preparing to disperse. Power had to be seized; and for this the Party prepared, systematically mobilising the support of large masses of workers and peasants, including their backward and vacillating elements, and combining political with technical preparations for armed insurrection. The proletariat in this way exercised its leadership of the peasant masses in practice.

Stalin explains the "defensive" position of the revolution as follows:

"One unique feature of the tactics of the revolution during this period deserves to be noted. This feature consists in this, that the revolution tries to make every, or almost every, step of its offensive look like a defensive measure. The refusal to evacuate the army was undoubtedly a serious offensive step of the revolution, yet this offensive was effected under the slogan of the defence of Leningrad against a possible attack by the foreign enemy. Undoubtedly the formation of the Military-Revolutionary Committee was an even more grave offensive step,

directed against the Provisional Government, yet it was carried out under the slogan of organising Soviet control over the activities of the district military headquarters. Undoubtedly the open passing over of the garrison to the side of the Military-Revolutionary Committee and the organisation of a network of Soviet commissars betokened the beginning of an uprising, yet these steps were carried out by the revolution under the slogan of the defence of the Leningrad Soviet against any possible action by the counter-revolution. The revolution seemed to camouflage its offensive steps with a smoke-screen of defence, in order to draw the hesitant, vacillating elements the more easily within its orbit. This may explain the outwardly defensive character of the speeches, articles and slogans of this period, which none the less are of a profoundly aggressive nature as regards their inner content."\*

As Stalin wrote:

"During the entire period of preparation for October, the Party constantly relied in its struggle upon the spontaneous upward swing of the revolutionary movement of the masses," and "while relying on the spontaneous upward swing, it kept in its own hands the undivided leadership of the movement."\*\*

But the counter-revolution was also not idle: it made every effort to smash the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik Party of course discerned the intentions of the counter-revolution; it mercilessly exposed them and forestalled blow by counter-blow.

The main lines of the tactics of the Bolsheviks in this period were prescribed by the genius of Lenin. He wrote a number of articles and drew up a number of manifestoes on the subject of preparation for insurrection and bent every effort in order that the favourable moment for insurrection should not be missed.

### *The Role of the Party and Central Committee in the Insurrection*

In an article entitled "The Crisis Has Matured," which appeared in the *Rabochy Put* of October 7, Lenin announced that the political conditions for the success of the insurrection had matured and that the working class was now assured of allies. He referred to the mass peasant movement in the central agricultural provinces.

\* Stalin, "Trotskyism or Leninism," *The October Revolution*

\*\* Stalin, "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists," *Leninism* Vol. I.



"... if in a peasant country, after seven months of a democratic republic, matters have reached the point of a peasant revolt, that is irrefutable proof that the revolution is suffering a nation-wide collapse, that it is passing through a crisis of unprecedented severity and that the forces of counter-revolution have gone the full limit. . . .

"In face of such a fact as a peasant revolt all other political symptoms, even were they to contradict the fact that a national crisis is maturing, would have no significance whatsoever. . . .

"After the agrarian question, the most important question in the state life of Russia is the national question, particularly for the petty-bourgeois masses of the population. And at the 'Democratic' Conference, which was packed by Messrs Tsereteli and Co., we find that the 'national' curia takes second place for radicalism, yielding only to the trade unions, and exceeding the curia of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the percentage of votes cast against the coalition (40 out of 55). The Kerensky government, which is suppressing the peasant revolt, is withdrawing the revolutionary troops from Finland, in order to strengthen the reactionary Finnish bourgeoisie. In the Ukraine, the conflicts of the Ukrainians in general with the government, and of the Ukrainian troops in particular, are becoming more and more frequent.

"Further, let us take the army, which in war time is of vital importance to the whole life of the state. We have seen that the Finnish army and the Baltic fleet have entirely broken away from the government. We have the testimony of the officer Dubasov, a non-Bolshevik, who speaks in the name of the whole front and declares in a manner more revolutionary than any Bolshevik that the soldiers will not fight any longer. We have the governmental reports stating that the soldiers are in a 'nervous' state of mind, and that it is impossible to guarantee 'order' (i.e., the participation of the troops in the suppression of the peasant revolt). We have, finally, the voting in Moscow, where fourteen thousand out of seventeen thousand soldiers voted for the Bolsheviks."<sup>a</sup>

Lenin goes on to refer to the conflict between the government and the railway workers and the post and telegraph employees and to the disintegration that was going on within the camp of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, which rendered the support of the latter to the government valueless. His conclusion was: "Together with the Left S.R.'s we now have a majority in the Soviets, in the army, and *in the country*." The political conditions for a triumphant insurrection had therefore matured. But for Lenin that was not enough. It was the duty of the Party to accomplish the armed insurrection.

\* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. VI

"... To renounce armed insurrection now would mean renouncing the chief watchword of Bolshevism ('All Power to the Soviets'), and also all revolutionary working class internationalism in general.

"But armed insurrection is a *special* form of political struggle, subject to special rules which must be attentively studied. Karl Marx expressed this thought with remarkable salience when he said that armed '*insurrection is an art quite as much as war.*'

"The principal rules of this art, as laid down by Marx, are as follows:

"(1) *Never play* with insurrection, but, when it is once begun, know firmly that it must be *carried through to the end.*

"(2) Concentrate, at the decisive place and time, *forces greatly superior* to those of the enemy, otherwise the latter, better prepared and better organised, will defeat and ruin the insurgents.

"(3) Once the insurrection has begun, it is necessary to act with the greatest *determination*, and, at all costs, on the *offensive*. 'The defensive is the death of every armed rising.'

"(4) Make sure of taking the enemy by surprise, and seize the moment when his troops are scattered.

"(5) Endeavour to win successes *each day*, even small ones (one might say 'each hour' in the case of one town), and at all costs maintain '*moral ascendancy*.' \*

"Applied to Russia in October 1917, this means a simultaneous offensive, as sudden and as rapid as possible, on Petrograd, from within and without, from the working class suburbs and from Finland, Reval and Kronstadt, the advance of *the whole* of the fleet; a concentration of forces which will overwhelmingly preponderate over the 15,000 to 20,000 (and perhaps more) of our 'bourgeois guard' (Cadets), our 'Vendean troops' (some of the Cossacks), etc. . . . \*\*

That is what Lenin wrote (in an article entitled "Advice from an Onlooker") on October 8, almost on the eve of that decisive session of the Central Committee of the Party at which the decision to seize power was taken. This session took place on October 10. Every member of the C.C. except two (Zinoviev and Kamenev) voted in favour of insurrection.<sup>1</sup> Hence the vast majority of

\* It has now been established that *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*, from which Lenin quotes, was written by Engels and not by Marx.

\*\* Lenin, *Marx-Engels-Marxism*

\*\*\* The resolution of the C.C. of October 10 reads as follows: "The C.C. declares that the international situation of the Russian revolution (the mutiny in the German fleet, which is an extreme manifestation of the maturing of the world socialist revolution throughout the whole of Europe, and the menace of peace on the part of the imperialists with the aim of crushing the revolution in Russia), the military situation (the obvious decision of the Russian bourgeoisie and Kerensky to surrender Petrograd to the Germans) and the fact that the proletarian party has secured a majority in the Soviets—all this, taken in conjunction with the peasant revolt and the swing of the

the members of the C.C. shared the position of Lenin on this question and drove a straight course for insurrection. At the session of October 16, at which, in addition to the members of the C.C., were present representatives of the Petrograd Party Committee, the military organisation, the factory and workshop committees, the trade unions and railway workers, practical measures were decided for the organisational leadership of the uprising and a central body set up for this purpose, consisting of Sverdlov, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky, Bubnov and Uritsky.

We are all aware of the fable spread by the Trotskyists to the effect that Trotsky was the leading spirit in the organisation of the insurrection.

That fable has long since been exploded. The fact is that Trotsky was not even a member of the central organising body charged with the leadership of the uprising. As Stalin long ago pointed out:

"Trotsky did not and could not have played any special role in the October uprising. . . . Being the president of the Petrograd Soviet, he only carried into effect the will of the respective Party authorities, which guided every step of Comrade Trotsky."

### *Strike-Breaking and Capitulation by the Rights*

The slanders of Trotsky notwithstanding, the line of the Party and the line of Lenin were identical. Lenin was the leader who guided the Party to the October victory, acting with the full consent of the Party and of its Central Committee. Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were opposed to the uprising, not only found themselves isolated within the C.C. but met with very little support from the Party as a whole. They set forth their views in

popular movement towards our Party (the elections in Moscow) and, finally, the obvious preparations for a second Kornilov attack (removal of troops from Petrograd, movement of Cossacks into Petrograd and surrounding of Minsk by Cossacks) places the armed insurrection on the order of the day.

". . . Recognising therefore, that armed insurrection is inevitable and that the time for it has fully matured, the C.C. calls upon all the Party organisations to guide themselves accordingly and from that standpoint to consider and decide all practical questions (Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region, removal of troops from Petrograd, demonstrations in Moscow and Minsk, etc.)."

\* Stalin, "Trotskyism or Leninism," *The October Revolution*.

a letter on *The Current Situation* addressed to the chief Party organisations, in which they stated that

"to declare an armed uprising now would mean risking not only the fate of our Party, but also the fate of the Russian and international revolution, with certainty of failure."

The letter attempted to prove that the Party would not be able to retain power even if it succeeded in assuming it, since it would be opposed not only by the whole of the bourgeoisie, but also by the whole of the peasantry. They recommended waiting until the Constituent Assembly met, in order then to carry on a parliamentary struggle as an opposition party within the Assembly.

"In the Constituent Assembly," they wrote, "we shall be so powerful an opposition party that in a country where universal suffrage prevails our opponents will be obliged to give way to us at every step; or else, in conjunction with the Left S.R.'s, non-party peasants and others, we shall form a government *bloc*, which will be obliged in the main to carry our programme into effect."

What Kamenev and Zinoviev had in mind was no more and no less than to conquer power by parliamentary action. It is interesting to note their panicky exaggeration of the strength of the enemy

"At the present moment nothing would be more dangerous than to underestimate the strength of the enemy and to overestimate our own strength. The forces of the enemy are stronger than may seem. Petrograd decides, and in Petrograd the enemies of the proletarian party have accumulated considerable forces: five thousand *Junkers*, excellently armed, organised and anxious . . . and able to fight, the headquarters staff, the shock troops, the Cossacks, a large part of the garrison and a very large part of the artillery disposed fan-shape around Petrograd. Moreover, with the aid of the Central Executive Committee the enemy will almost certainly endeavour to bring troops from the front. The proletarian party would be obliged to fight with a relation of forces entirely different from that which existed at the time of the Kornilov revolt. At that time we fought side by side with the S.R.'s, the Mensheviks, and even part of the followers of Kerensky. Now, however, the proletarian party would be obliged to fight the Black Hundreds, as well as the Cadets, Kerensky and the Provisional Government and the Central Executive Committee (the S.R.'s and the Mensheviks)."

Truly, fear magnifies danger.

Lenin replied to Zinoviev and Kamenev with extreme severity in his *Letter to Comrades*.

"The arguments these comrades [*i.e.*, Zinoviev and Kamenev—*N.P.*] advanced are so feeble, so astoundingly indicative of confusion, fright and collapse in every fundamental idea of Bolshevism and revolutionary-proletarian internationalism, that it is not easy to discover the explanation for such shameful vacillation."

We shall find the explanation if we compare the attitude of Kamenev and Zinoviev before the October Revolution with the position occupied by Kamenev prior to the April Conference, and partly at the Conference itself. Then, as well as now, we note an underestimation of the strength of the proletariat and of its capacity to lead the peasant masses during the process of the growth of the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution.

Instead of loyally subordinating themselves to the Central Committee and the overwhelming majority of the Party, Kamenev and Zinoviev attempted to appeal over the head of the Party to the non-Party masses through the compromising paper *Novaya Zhizn*.

Lenin, in a letter addressed *To the Members of the Bolshevik Party*, vigorously condemned this act of disorganisation, which was unprecedented in the history of the Bolshevik Party.

"I should consider it disgraceful on my part if, on account of my former close relations with these former comrades, I were to hesitate to condemn them. I declare outright that I do not consider either of them comrades any longer and that I will fight with all my might, both in the Central Committee and at the Congress, to secure the expulsion of both of them from the Party."

"For a workers' party, which is being faced ever more frequently by the facts of the situation with the necessity for insurrection, cannot accomplish that difficult task if unpublished decisions of the Centre, after their adoption, are to be disputed in the non-Party press, and vacillation and confusion brought into the ranks of the fighters."

"Let Messrs. Zinoviev and Kamenev found their own party from the dozens of disoriented people, or from the candidates to the Constituent Assembly. The workers will not join such a party. . . ."

Lenin, again referring to the arguments of Zinoviev and Kamenev against insurrection, says:

"These so-called ideological arguments reduce themselves to the following two. First, that it is necessary to 'wait' for the Constituent Assembly. Let us wait, maybe we can hold on until then—that is the whole

argument. Maybe, despite famine, despite economic ruin, despite the fact that the patience of the soldiers is exhausted, despite Rodzyanko's measures to surrender Petrograd to the Germans (even despite the lock-outs), perhaps we can hold on . . .

"The second is clamorous pessimism. With the bourgeoisie and Kerensky, everything is fine; with us, everything is bad. The capitalists have everything wonderfully in hand. . . . Nevertheless, the problem will be solved, the workers will consolidate their ranks, and the peasant revolt and the extreme impatience of the soldiers at the front will do their work! Let us rally our ranks closer—the proletariat must win!"\*

Lenin proposed the expulsion of Kamenev and Zinoviev from the Party, which shows his attitude to Party discipline within the C. C. and the enormity and profundity of the opportunist errors of Zinoviev and Kamenev on the eve of the October Revolution. The proposal was not approved by the Central Committee. But the strike-breakers were forced to hold their peace and submit to the iron discipline of the Party.

On October 24, Kerensky in the Pre-Parliament delivered a melodramatic and Bonapartist speech in which he promised to extirpate the Bolsheviks root and branch. On the night of October 24 the Provisional Government attempted to have the premises of the Bolshevik newspapers occupied by troops. But that very night, and during the following day, troops and detachments of the workers' Red Guard, practically without firing a shot, took possession of the chief strategic points of Petrograd. On the evening of October 25 the Second Congress of Soviets met and established a Soviet government headed by Lenin.

The revolution in Petrograd was carried out in a remarkably organised fashion, demonstrating how thoroughly the Party, under the guidance of Lenin, had learned the lessons of former revolutions and how effectively it availed itself of the relation of forces existing in the country, and particularly in the capital. In Moscow the fighting dragged on for several days, partly owing to defects of organisation and partly to vacillation among the Party leaders.

The decrees promulgated by the Second Congress of Soviets on the subjects of peace, land and workers' control immediately won the Soviet government the sympathy and support of vast

masses of workers, soldiers and peasants and gained it recognition throughout the greater part of the country and at the front.

The early measures of the Soviet government, however, were greatly hampered by the conduct of the opportunist elements within the Central Committee of the Party, who were intimidated by the savage attacks of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, particularly by the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s. The Party was faced with the problem of defending the conquered power, of organising the masses of the people around the slogans with which the Party had effected the revolution, *viz.*, peace, land and workers' control, and of immediately proceeding to introduce socialist measures. Instead, the Party was being called upon to come to a compromise with the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, renounce the socialist character of the revolution and surrender power to the petty bourgeoisie. Five members of the Central Committee (Zinoviev, Kamenev, Nogin, Milyutin and Rykov) and several of the People's Commissars (Larin, Shlyapnikov, Teodorovich, Ryazanov and others) advocated that concessions of principle should be made to the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s whose first and prime demand was the removal of Lenin from the government and the guarantee of a majority for themselves within the government. This, in fact, would have meant surrendering the power to the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s. Lenin and the majority of the Central Committee, supported by the whole Party, put a firm check to the waverers.

"Shame on the faint-hearted, the waverers, the doubters, on all who have allowed themselves to be intimidated by the bourgeoisie, or have given way to the outcries of its direct and indirect coadjutors. There is not a shade of hesitation among the masses of the workers and soldiers of Petrograd, Moscow and other cities. Our Party stands solidly and firmly, as one individual, in defence of the Soviet government, in defence of the interests of all the toilers, and primarily of the workers and the poor peasantry."

That is what the Central Committee wrote in its manifesto to the members of the Party on the subject of the resignation of a number of Party members from the C.C. and the government.

The firmness displayed by the Party was effective. The members of the C.C. and the Peoples' Commissars who had adopted the path of strike-breaking and capitulation acknowledged their errors and within a very short time resumed their position as

leaders. The Party had no inclination to remind them of the gross error, bordering on treachery, they had been guilty of, after that error had been acknowledged and corrected. Subsequent events, however, showed that in the case of many of those who went astray in October 1917—Kamenev, Zinoviev and Rykov, among others—their errors had very profound roots.

### *Specific Features of the October Revolution*

• We have seen that the struggle of the Party in the interval February to October passed through several phases. Until July the struggle was a peaceful one, its aim being the assumption of power by the Menshevik-S.R. Soviets, which at that time were supported by the majority of the workers and soldiers. The Party strove for the establishment by peaceful means of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry by the removal of the bourgeoisie (which at that time was quite possible). By means of a readjustment of forces within the Soviets, by means of re-elections to the Soviets and the replacement of the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s by Bolsheviks, this dictatorship was to have been transformed into a socialist dictatorship. But after the July events the real power passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie. The Party then set itself the task of overthrowing the power of the bourgeoisie. During the Kornilov revolt, thanks to the widespread movement of workers and soldiers against the establishment of a counter-revolutionary dictatorship, the assumption of power by the Menshevik-S.R. Soviets again became a practical possibility, and the Bolsheviks again called upon them to do so.

But once again the conciliators rejected a *bloc* with the Bolsheviks and once again handed the power over to the bourgeoisie. Thereby they finally and completely undermined their position within the Soviets, with the result that in October the power was wrenched from the hands of the bourgeoisie by Bolshevik Soviets and a dictatorship of the workers and poor peasantry established. The chief and most dangerous social support of imperialism at that period was the petty-bourgeois Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties.

“It was natural for the main blow of the Bolsheviks to be directed at that time against these parties, for without isolating these parties it



was impossible to count on the *rupture* between the toiling masses and imperialism, and without making sure of this rupture the victory of the Soviet revolution could not be expected.”<sup>\*</sup>

In the interval between March and October, vast work was performed by the Party in winning the support of the masses.

“In actual fact, in March 1917, there was not and could not be a ready-made political army. The Bolsheviks were merely creating an army of that sort (and did finally create it by October 1917) in the course of the struggle and conflicts of classes between April and October 1917. They were creating it both through the April demonstration and the June and July demonstrations, and through the elections to the ward and municipal councils, and through the struggle against the Kornilov *putsch*, and by means of winning over the Soviets. A political army is not the same thing as a military army. While a military command begins a war with an army ready at its hand, the Party has to create its army in the course of the struggle itself, in the course of the collisions between different classes, as fast as the masses themselves become convinced by their own experience that the slogans of the Party, the policy of the Party, are right.”<sup>\*\*</sup>

The peculiar feature of the October Revolution, one that accounted for the comparative ease of its success, was that the Party was able to combine the realisation of the socialist revolution with the realisation of the aims of the bourgeois-democratic revolution which had still not been effected.

“We solved the problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, in passing, as a ‘by-product’ of the main and real *proletarian* revolutionary socialist work. . . . We said, and proved by deeds, that bourgeois-democratic reforms are a by-product of the proletarian, *i.e.*, of the socialist revolution. It should be stated that the Kautskys, Hilferdings, Martovs, Chernovs. . . . and other heroes of Two-and-a-Half Marxism were incapable of understanding this relation between the bourgeois-democratic and the proletarian socialist revolution. The first grows into the second. The second, in passing, solves the problems of the first. The second consolidates the work of the first. Struggle, and struggle alone, decides how far the second shall succeed in surpassing the first.”<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

Having seized power, it was natural that the working class should proceed to the expropriation of the implements and means of production. The establishment of workers’ control over mills

\* Stalin, “The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists,” *Leninism*, Vol. I.

\*\* *Ibid*

\*\*\* Lenin, “The Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution,” *Selected Works*, Vol. VI.

and factories immediately after the October victory was but the first step in that direction. At the same time the peasants confined themselves at first to the expropriation of the estates of the landlords, a cause in which the peasants were interested. By effecting its proletarian revolution the working class secured the support of the poor peasants against the kulaks, and neutralised the middle peasants. By abolishing the estates of the landlords and destroying the survivals of the feudal system, and thereby bringing the bourgeois-democratic revolution to completion, the working class won the sympathy of the whole of the peasantry. It was not until several months later, when the resistance of the city bourgeoisie was, if not entirely crushed, at least broken, that the expropriation of the village kulaks began.

Certain textbooks and articles on the history of the Party contain an opportunist exposition of the October Revolution, representing it as consisting of two separate and independent revolutions—a socialist and a bourgeois revolution. Such a conception is a sheer capitulation to the Mensheviks, who deny the socialist character of the October Revolution and represent it as having been a bourgeois revolution and the beginning of a new phase of capitalist development in Russia.

This conception is shared by the Trotskyists and the Right opportunists. According to the Trotskyists, genuine socialist construction would have been possible in Russia only when the proletariat in the advanced capitalist countries had seized power. Since this was delayed the only thing that remained for the Soviet government was either to tack and manoeuvre and resort to every kind of risky shift and adventure, or else degenerate into a bourgeois government.

From the point of view of the Right opportunists (some of whom, in conjunction with Trotsky, later attempted to criticise the Party from the "Left," i.e., from the point of view of Left Menshevism) the October Revolution in Russia, which they regarded as unripe for socialism, was a leap in the dark, a sheer gamble. The first serious political proposal they made after the October Revolution was to surrender the government to the Mensheviks and S.R.'s, in fact, to the bourgeoisie. That the October Revolution prevailed is explained by the Rights as being due to the fact that it was a socialist revolution only nominally, whereas in actual fact it was a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

*Foreign and Domestic Position of the Soviet Government*

Stalin's article, "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists," gives a classic description of the situation at home and abroad at the time of the October Revolution. He says.

"Three factors, external in nature, account for the comparative ease with which the proletarian revolution in Russia succeeded in breaking the chains of imperialism and thus overthrowing the rule of the bourgeoisie.

"First: the factor that the October Revolution began in a period of desperate struggle between the two principal imperialist groups, the Anglo-French and the Austro-German, at a time when, engaged in a life-and-death struggle, these two groups had neither the time nor the means to devote serious attention to the struggle against the October Revolution. This factor was of the utmost importance for the October Revolution, which was thereby enabled to take advantage of the fierce clash within the imperialist world to strengthen and organise its own forces.

"Second: the factor that the October Revolution began during the imperialist World War, at a time when the toiling masses, tormented by the war and thirsting for peace, were by the very logic of events being led to the proletarian revolution as the only way to escape from the war. This factor was of extreme importance for the October Revolution, since it put into its hands the mighty weapon of peace, made it easy for it to connect the Soviet revolution with the ending of the hated war and thus created mass sympathy for it both in the West, among the workers, and in the East among the oppressed peoples.

"Third: the powerful working class movement in Europe and the maturing of a revolutionary crisis in the West and in the East called forth by the long drawn out imperialist war. This factor was of inestimable importance for the revolution in Russia, since it assured it of reliable allies outside Russia for the latter's struggle against world imperialism.

"But, besides factors of an external nature, the October Revolution possessed also quite a number of internal favourable factors which facilitated its victory.

"The following conditions must be regarded as the principal ones:

"First, the October Revolution enjoyed the most active support of the overwhelming majority of the working class in Russia.

"Second, it enjoyed the undoubted support of the poor peasants and the majority of the soldiers, who were thirsting for peace and land

"Third, it had at its head as its guiding force so tried and tested a party as the Bolshevik Party, strong not only in its experience and years of discipline but also by reason of its manifold and close connections with the toiling masses.

"Fourth, the October Revolution had to face enemies who were comparatively easy to overcome, such as the more or less feeble Russian

bourgeoisie, the landlord class, which was quite demoralised by the peasant 'revolts,' and the compromising parties (the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, which had become completely bankrupt politically during the war.

"Fifth, the revolution had at its disposal the extensive area of the young state, in which it was able to manoeuvre freely, retreat when circumstances so required, rest, gather strength, etc.

"Sixth, in its struggle against counter-revolution, the October Revolution could count upon sufficient resources of food, fuel, and raw materials within the country.

"The combination of the above external and internal factors created that special situation which determined the comparative ease with which the October Revolution won its victory."\*

The October Revolution triumphed. The power seized by the working class was retained. The political slogans under which the October Revolution was effected secured the sympathies of vast masses both within the country and abroad. The popularity it enjoyed abroad was a factor of extreme importance to the October Revolution in its early days, for the revolution had also to be carried out at the front in the face of the grim forces of German imperialism. Nothing would appear easier than for the German imperialists to have launched an attack against the revolution as soon as it had triumphed in the capital and before it had succeeded in establishing itself throughout the country. But German imperialism did not attack, and did not dare attack, for it was impotent to do so. A revolution that demanded peace was too powerful a charm for the soldiers of the German and Austrian armies.

It required several months before the ruling classes of the Austro-German coalition were able to organise the offensive that forced the Soviet government to conclude the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. That offensive would have been impossible while the impression of the October Revolution was still fresh. Even Kautsky was obliged to greet the October Revolution with a show of approval, and at first found nothing to say against it, he merely expressed the hope that the Bolsheviks would not be utopians. Coming from Kautsky this meant that the Bolsheviks should not go beyond the bounds of a democratic revolution.

\* Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. I.

When however these hopes were not justified Kautsky undertook a furious campaign of lies and slanders against the October Revolution.

The Party effected the revolution with the help of slogans which disarmed the Provisional Government and afforded the opportunity of consolidating the Soviet government and of rallying its forces for the moment when counter-revolution both at home and abroad passed to the offensive.

To a large extent this was facilitated by the clear and precise tactical attitude assumed by the Party towards events as they matured; also by the revolutionary firmness with which the Party immediately suppressed all signs of vacillation and all attempts at strike-breaking within its own ranks. What was the source of these attempts, and why did they assume such an open character on the eve of the October Revolution and immediately following it? They undoubtedly arose from an underestimation of the strength of the proletariat and its fighting capacity, and particularly its ability to retain power in a backward and peasant country. This was associated with an incorrect estimate of the role of the peasantry and the conviction that the conquest of power by the working class would turn the peasants (and particularly the middle peasants) into a reactionary force. It is true that certain members of the C.C. (Trotsky, for instance), who incorrectly estimated the role of the peasantry both prior and subsequent to the October Revolution, nevertheless displayed no hesitation at the moment of the October Revolution. This of course, does not mean that Trotsky was not guilty of errors even at that time. A gross error, one that proved that Trotsky had not understood the Bolshevik view of the insurrection, was the public announcement of the uprising for October 25 (the day when the Second Congress of Soviets was to meet) by the Petrograd Soviet, whose chairman Trotsky was. Lenin condemned this non-Bolshevik fetishism of Soviet legality in the most vigorous fashion. "Events proved that Lenin was right," Stalin says. "We know that the insurrection was begun before the opening of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. We know that the power was actually seized before the opening of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets."\* But they were convinced that the Russian revolution and the seizure of power

\* Stalin, *On the Opposition*,

by the Russian working class would be the signal for an immediate outbreak in the West Trotsky frequently expressed the conviction in 1917, declaring moreover, that if the revolution in the West failed to come to the aid of the Russian revolution, the latter would go under.

In Trotsky's opinion the most the October Revolution could pretend to was to be the beginning, the signal and impulse for the revolution in the West.

But the view of the Party (as it was defined in the resolution of the Fifteenth Party Conference on the Social-Democratic deviation) was that:

"The October Revolution is not only a signal, an impulse, a starting point for the socialist revolution in the West, but at the same time, first, it is a basis for the further development of the world revolution, and, secondly, opens up a transition period from capitalism to socialism within the U.S.S.R. (the dictatorship of the proletariat), during which the proletariat, provided it conducts a correct policy towards the peasantry, can, and will, successfully build a complete socialist society, that is, of course, if the strength of the international revolutionary movement, on the one hand, and the strength of the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. on the other, will be sufficient to safeguard the U.S.S.R. from military intervention on the part of imperialism."

The opportunist Right deviation, against which the Party vigorously fought both after the February Revolution and on the eve of the October Revolution, meant complete capitulation to the Mensheviks, the abandonment of the struggle against the counter-revolutionary imperialist bourgeoisie of Russia and of Europe, the virtual rejection of the struggle against the war and the adoption of the position of the defencists

Had the Party in October remained in a state of indecision and placed its hope in the Constituent Assembly, it would have inevitably forfeited the sympathy of the masses and would have been crushed by the forces of counter-revolution long before it could have succeeded in becoming a legal opposition party in the Constituent Assembly, let alone have assumed power by parliamentary means, on which Kamenev and Zinoviev based their hopes. That this was not the case, that, on the contrary, the Party achieved a gigantic victory, establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat over one-sixth of the surface of the globe, and thereby forcing a tremendous breach in the stronghold of world imperial-



ism, was due solely to the fact that at the crucial moment the Party succeeded in completely subduing the opportunist and capitulationist tendencies within its own ranks, tendencies which had assumed the character of open strike-breaking, in forestalling all attempts to slide over to Menshevism, in closing the ranks of the Party under the firm leadership of the Central Committee and in gaining the support not only of the proletarian masses, but also of the peasant masses.